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*Lives of  
Fair and Gallant Ladies*

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VOLUME I







and

See

Lives  
of  
Fair and Gallant Ladies  
By  
The Seigneur De Brantôme

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL

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VOLUME I

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The Alexandrian Society, Inc.  
London and New York  
1922

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## FOREWORD

THIS very fine and accurate translation of *The Lives of Fair and Gallant Ladies* was made by Mr. A. R. Allinson and because of its merit must be considered one of the great English translations, equalling in every quality those of the 16th and 17th centuries. The text of Brantôme's great work is given practically complete in these volumes and the only modifications are based upon good taste and not on any fearful prudery. A few of Brantôme's examples that illustrate his points belong more in a treatise on abnormal pathology than in a book of literary or historical interest and value, so nothing of any value is lost by omitting them. The rare charm, shrewd wisdom, amusing anecdote, literary merit and historical and social information will be appreciated by intelligent readers.

The cover design used on this book was made by C. O. Czeschka.

en sont estées plus curieuses & exquisés que les arts honteux  
parfums qu'en parure de superbes habits desquelles nos  
dames en ont pris depuis les patrons & belles inventions.  
Ainsi Les autres Les auoyent apres des Medales & Statues  
antiques de ces dames Romaines que lon voit encorés parmy  
plusieurs antiquitez qui sont ender en siespaigne & en  
Italie Lesquelles qui les contemplant bien trouueront Les  
vulures & leur habitz en perfection & tres propres a se  
faire aymer Mais aujourdhuy nos Dames françoises  
s'en paquent tout ala Reue de Navarre elles en desbrouent  
le grand merce Doyla pourquoy il fault bien & deudeuon  
assure a ces belles dames si bon en promet si richement  
& potiusciment parces De sorte que j'ay ouy dire a  
anciens Courtizans mes Compaignons ausin que nous  
dousions ensemble qu'ilz Les ayoyent meues ausin que  
les constructes & conchees meues entre deux l'incende &  
sans en List Le plus encrechy de broderie qui en sceust  
sçauoir faire Les autres disoyent que non & qu'il ny  
auoit que le roy national sans aucun fard ny artific  
il ne fait doubte vrayement que La veue ne soit plus  
agrecable que celle du monde d'une belle femme toute  
parfaite en beauté, mais malheureusement ce freque telle  
Ruyd on treuue par effort que l'enze cest excellente  
peintre ayant este prie par quelques hommeses dames &  
filles de se connoissances de leur donnee le portraire

(From a fac-simile page of the manuscript  
*Recueil des Dames*. Biblio. Nat: Mss. Nouv. fœc.  
No. 20-474, folio 168.)



DEDICATION  
TO MONSEIGNEUR LE DUC D'ALENÇON  
OF BRABANT AND COUNT OF FLANDERS

SON AND BROTHER OF OUR FRENCH KINGS

MY GRACIOUS LORD,



SEEING how you have full often done me the honour at Court to converse with me in great privy of sundry jests and merry tales, the which are so familiar and ready with you they may well be said to grow apace before men's very eyes in your Lordship's mouth, so great your wit is and so keen and subtile, and your speech the same, and right eloquent to boot,—for this cause have I set me to indite these discourses, such as they be, to the best of my poor ability, to the end that in this wise some of them may please you, making the time to pass lightly and reminding you of me in your conversations, wherewith erstwhile you have honoured me as much as any gentleman of all the Court.

To you then, my Lord, do I dedicate this present book, and do beseech you fortify the same with your name and authority, till that I may find leisure to attend to discourses of a more serious content. Of such I pray you note one in especial, the which I have all but finished,

[vii]



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## DEDICATION

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wherein I do deduce a comparison of six great Princes and Captains that be to-day abroad in this our Christendom, to wit: the King Henri III. your brother, Your Highness' self, the King of Navarre your brother-in-law, the Duc de Guise, the Duc de Maine, and the Prince of Parma, making record for each one of you of your noblest deeds of valour and high emprize, of your excellencies and exploits, the full tale and complement whereof I do resign to others better qualified than I to indite the same.

Meanwhile, My Lord, I do beseech God to bless you always more and more in your greatness, happiness and nobility.

And I am for all time

Your very humble and very obedient subject and very loving servant.

BOURDEILLE.<sup>1</sup>



## REGRETTING THE DEATH OF THE DUC D'ALENÇON

I had already dedicated this second Part of my Discourses on Women to the aforesaid my Gracious Lord d'Alençon, the while he yet lived,—seeing how he oft did me the honour to be my friend and to converse very privily with me, and was ever right curious to be informed of mirthful tales. Wherefore, albeit his generous and valorous and most noble body hath fallen on the field of honour, I have not thought good for that to recall my erstwhile dedication; but I do repeat and renew the same to his illustrious ashes and noble spirit, of the valorousness whereof and of his great deeds and high achievements I do treat in their turn among those of the other great Princes and Captains. For of a truth he was indeed a great Prince and a great Captain, if such an one there was ever,—the more so considering he is dead so untimeously.

Enough of such serious themes; let us discourse a while of merrier matters.





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## HISTORICAL NOTE



PIERRE DE BOURDEILLE, Abbé de Brantôme et d'André, Vicomte de Bourdeille, was born in Périgord, in 1527, in the reign of François I. He early took up the career of arms, serving under his friend François de Guise, Duke of Lorraine, as his Captain, the same who was killed before Orleans by Poltrot de Méré. Afterwards he came up to Court, and was Gentleman of the Bedchamber under Charles IX., who showed him much favour. On the King's death he retired to his estates, where he composed his Works. These are: *Vies des hommes illustres et des grands capitaines françois*; *Vies des grands capitaines étrangers*; *Vies des dames illustres*; *Vies des dames galantes*; *Anecdotes touchant le duel*; and *Rodomontades et jurements des Espagnols*.—All that really concerns us here is the *Vies des dames galantes*. It is especially from this point of view that we propose to speak of Pierre de Bourdeille, known almost exclusively to posterity under the name of Brantôme. As to his Essays in the manner of Plutarch, these do not come into our purview at all. Besides which, I am of opinion, it is in this book that Brantôme appears under his most characteristic aspect, and that it is here we may best learn to know and appreciate his genius.

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## HISTORICAL NOTE

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A gentleman of family, acknowledged and treated as kinsman by Queen Margot, wife of Henry IV., living habitually in the society of the most famous men of his time, a contemporary of Rabelais, Marot and Ronsard, a sincere but unbigoted Catholic, a man of exceptional literary endowments, Brantôme is one of the happiest representatives of the French mind in the XVIth Century.

It is the period of the Renaissance,—the days when Europe resounds with the fame of our gallant King Francis I. and his deeds of prowess in love and war, the days when Titian and Primaticcio were leaving behind on French palace walls immortal traces of their genius, when Jean Goujon was carving his admirable figures round the fountains of the Louvre and across its front, when Rabelais was uttering his stupendous guffaw, that was the Comedy of all human life, when Marot and Ronsard were writing their graceful stanzas, when the fair “Marguerite des Marguerites,”—the Queenly Pearl of Pearls,—was telling her delightful tales of love and adventure in the *Heptameron*.—Then comes the death of Francis I. His son mounts the throne. Protestantism makes serious progress in France, and Montgomery precipitates the succession of Francis II. This last wears the crown for one year only, succumbing to a fatal inflammation of the ears. Then it is Mary Stuart leaves France for ever, and with streaming eyes, as she watches the beloved shores where she has been Queen of France fade out of sight, sings sad and slow:

Adieu, plaisant pays de France!

And now we find seated on the throne of France a young Monarch of a strange, wild, unattractive exterior.

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## HISTORICAL NOTE

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His eye is pale, colourless and shifty, seeming to be void of all expression. He trusts no man, and has no real assurance of his power as Sovereign; he looks long and suspiciously at those about him before speaking, rarely bestows his confidence and believes himself constantly surrounded by spies. 'Tis a nervous, timid child,—'tis Charles IX. History treats him with an extreme severity; and the "St. Bartholomew" has thrown a lurid light over this unhappy Prince's figure. He allowed the massacres on the fatal nights of the 24th and 25th of August, and even shot down the flying Protestants from his palace roof. Without going into the interminable discussions of historians as to this last alleged fact, which is as strongly denied by some authorities as it is maintained by others, I am not one of those who say hard things of Charles IX. It is more a sentiment of pity I feel for him,—this monarch who loved Brantôme and Marot, and who protected Henri IV. against Catherine de Medici. I see him surrounded by brothers whom he had learned to distrust. The Duc d'Alençon is on the spot, a legitimate object of detestation by reason of the subterranean intrigues he is for ever hatching against his person; while his other brother Henri (afterwards Henri III.), Catherine's favourite son, is in Poland, kept sedulously informed of every variation in the Prince's always feeble health, waiting impatiently for the hour when he must hurry back to France to secure the crown he covets. Then his sister's vicious outbreaks are a source of constant pain and anxiety to him; and last but not least there is his mother Catherine de Medici, an incubus that crushed out his very life-breath. He cannot forget the tortures his brother Francis suffered from his mysteri-



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## HISTORICAL NOTE

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ous malady, and his premature death after a single year's reign.

Catherine hated Mary Stuart, his young Queen, whose only fault was to have exaggerated in herself all the frailties together with all the physical perfections of a woman; and dreadful words had been whispered with bated breath about the Queen Mother. An Italian, deprived of all power while her husband lived, insulted by a proud and beautiful favourite, yet knowing herself well fitted for command, she had brought up her children with ideas of respect and submission to her will they were never able to throw off. The ill-will she bore her daughter-in-law was the cause of all those accusations History has listened to over readily. But Charles, a nervous, affectionate child, whose natural impulses however had been chilled by his mother's influence and the indifference of his father Henri II., was thrown back on himself, and grew up timid, suspicious and morose. The frantic love of Francis for his fascinating Queen, the cold dignity of Catherine in face of slights and cruel mortifications, her bitter disappointment during her eldest son's reign, her Italian origin (held then even more than now to imply an implacable determination to avenge all injuries), her indifference to the sudden and appalling death of the young King, the insinuations of her enemies,—all combined to make a profound impression on Charles, giving a furtive and, if we may say so, a haggard bent to his character. Presently, seated on the throne of France, Huguenots and Catholics all about him, exposed to the insults and pretensions of the Guise faction on the one hand and that of Coligny on the other, dragged now this way now that between the two, yet all the while instinct-

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## HISTORICAL NOTE

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ively drawn toward the Catholic side by ancestral faith and his mother's counsels no less than by reasons of state, Charles signed the fatal order authorizing the Massacre of the Saint Bartholomew.

Was the young King's action justifiable or no? It is no business of ours to discuss the question here; but much may be alleged in his excuse. Again whether he did actually fire on the terrified Protestants from the Louvre is a point vehemently debated,—but one it in no way concerns us here to decide. There is no doubt however that, dating from those two terrible nights, a steady decline declared itself in his health and vitality. In no long time he died; and his brother Henri, Duke of Anjou and King of Poland, duly warned of his approaching end, arrived in hot haste to take over the crown to which he was next in succession.

This period of political and religious ferment was no less the period *par excellence* of gallantry. In its characteristics it bears considerable resemblance to the days of the Empire. At both epochs love was quick, fierce and violent. Hurry was the mark of the times. In the midst of these everlasting struggles between Huguenot and Catholic, who could be sure of to-morrow? So men made it a point to indulge no attachment that was too serious,—for them love was become a mere question of choice and quantity; while women avoided a grand passion with a fervour worthy of a better cause. If ever a deep and earnest passion does show itself, it is an exception, an anomaly; if we find a woman stabbing her faithless husband to death on catching him in the arms of another, let us not for an instant suppose 'tis the fierce stirring

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#### HISTORICAL NOTE

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of a loving heart which in the frenzy of its jealousy avenges the wrong it has suffered,—to die presently of sorrow and remorse, or at the least to suffer long and sorely. This act of daring,—so carefully recorded by the chroniclers of the time,—is only the effect of strong self-love cruelly wounded. But powerful as this feeling may be, it would scarcely be adequate to explain so energetic an act, if we did not remember how frequently ladies in the XVIth Century were exposed to scenes of bloodshed. The dagger and the sword were as familiar to their eyes as the needle; and Brantôme has devoted a whole Discourse,—his Fifth, to courageous dames, and seems positively to scorn weak and timid women! How opposite is this to the sentiment of the present day, where one of the charms of womanhood is held to consist in her having nothing in common with man and being for ever in need of his protection. A few isolated cases then excepted, there existed between men and women nothing better than what Chamfort has wittily defined as “l'échange de deux fantaisies et le contact de deux épidermes,”—in other words gallantry pure and simple.

This then was the atmosphere our Author breathed. His life offers nothing specially striking in the way of incident. No need for me to take him from the arms of his nurse, to follow each of his steps through life and piously close his eyes in death. He served his time without special distinction or applause at the Court of Charles IX. In all he did, he showed so modest a reserve that, but for his Works, his very existence would have remained unknown. He is not like Bussy-Rabutin, the incidents of whose wild and wicked life filled and defaced a big book, or like Tallemant, whose diary, if diary it

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## HISTORICAL NOTE

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can be called, was written day by day and recounted each day's exploits. Brantôme's life and work leave little trace of his own personality, beyond the impression of a genial, smiling, witty man of the world. I will be as plain and discreet as himself, and will make no effort to separate the Author from his book.

Brantôme possesses one of those happy, gentle, well ordered natures, which systematically avoid every form of excess and exaggeration. His book *Des Dames Galantes* is from beginning to end a protest against immoderate passion. It is above all a work of taste. Its seven Discourses are devoted exclusively to stories of love and passion, yet a man must be straightlaced indeed to feel any sort of repulsion. Another extraordinary merit! in spite of the monotony of the subject matter, everlastingly the same, the reader's attention never flags, and one tale read, he is irresistibly drawn on to make acquaintance with the next.

Such praise, I am aware, is very high; and especially when we possess such masterpieces in this *genre* as the Tales of Boccaccio, of Pietro Aretino, some of those of Ariosto, those of Voltaire, the short stories of Tallemant des Réaux and the indiscretions of the *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules*. I name only the most familiar examples. Of course all these works do not offer a complete resemblance to the *Vies des Dames Galantes*, but they all belong to the same race and family. I propose to say a few passing words of each of these productions.

The most remarkable among all these chroniclers of the frailties of the female heart is undoubtedly Boccaccio. Pietro Aretino has done himself an irreparable wrong by writing in such a vein that no decent man dare confess

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to having read him. Ariosto is a story-teller only by the way, but then he is worthy of all imitation. The *Heptameron* is a collection of stories the chief value of which consists in a sensibility and charming grace that never fail. Tallemant tells a tale of gallantry between two daintily worded sentiments. Voltaire in this as in all departments shows an incontestable superiority of wit and *verve*. There is nothing new in La Fontaine; 'tis always the same wondrous charm, so simple in appearance, so deep in reality. As to Bussy, a man of the world and a gentleman, but vicious, spiteful and envious, his *Histoire amoureuse* is his revenge on mankind, a deliberate publication of extravagant personalities flavoured with wit.

Boccaccio, to say nothing of his striking originality, possesses other merits of the very highest order. The sorrows of unhappy love are told with genuine pathos, while lovers' wiles and the punishments they meet with at once raise a smile and provoke a resolve to profit by such valuable lessons. True Dioneo's quaint narratives are not precisely fit for ladies' ears; yet so daintily are they recounted, the most *risqué* episodes so cleverly sketched in, it is impossible to accuse them of indelicacy. An entire absence of bitterness, a genial indulgence for human weakness, a hearty admiration of women and a doctrine of genial complaisance as the only possible philosophy of life, these are the qualities that make the *Decameron* the masterpiece of this kind of composition.

Brantôme has not the same preponderating influence in literature that Boccaccio possesses, but he comes next after him. The "Lives of Gallant Ladies" are not, any more than the *Novelli*, inventions pure and simple; they

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are anecdotes, reminiscences. The great merit of these Tales of Boccaccio is the same as that of Balzac's Novels or Molière's Comedies,—to fix a character, to define a phase of manners in the life of the Author's day; in a word to create by induction and analogy a living being, hitherto unnoticed by every-day observers, but instantly recognized as lifelike. This is the true spirit of assimilation and generalisation,—the work of *genius*. Well! as for Brantôme, he is a man of talent and wit, not genius. We claim no more; genius is not so common as might be supposed, if we hearkened to all the acclamations daily raised round sundry statues,—but plaster after all, however cunningly contrived to look like bronze.

Brantôme's fame is already firmly established. To live for two centuries and a half without boring his readers; above all to be a book that scholars, men of sober learning and of literary taste, still read in these latter days, is a success worthy of some earnest thought. This chronicle of gallantry, this collection, as the Author himself describes it, of happy tricks played on each other by men and women, possesses a quite exquisite flavour of youth and freshness,—the whole told with a good-nature, a *verve*, an unconventionality, that are inexpressibly charming. You feel the characters living and breathing through the delicate, pliant style. You see the very glance of a woman's eye; you hear her ardent, or cunningly alluring, words. For such as can read with a heart unstirred, the book is a series of delicious surprises.

Strong predispositions, nay! positive prejudices, stand in the way of the proper appreciation of our Author. Such is the Puritanism of language and prudery of manners in our day, it would seem *prima facie* an impossible

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## HISTORICAL NOTE

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task to popularize Brantôme. By common agreement we speak of the *esprit français* as distinguished from the *esprit gaulois*, the latter term being used to denote a something more frank and outspoken. I heartily wish the division were a true one; for I can never forget I belong to this mighty Nineteenth Century. But for my own part, on a careful consideration of the facts, I should make a triple rather than a twofold classification. There would be the *esprit gaulois*, the *esprit français*, *not* the spirit of the age one atom, I must be allowed to observe, *and* thirdly a certain spirit of curling-irons and kid gloves and varnished boots, a sort of bastard, a cross between French and English, equally shocked at *Tristram Shandy* and the *Physiologie du Mariage* as coarse and immoral productions. *This* is our spirit, if spirit we have.

The two first types have a real and positive value; but the third is the sole and only one nowadays permitted or current as legal tender,—the others are much too outspoken. Well! I will hold my tongue, and mind my own business. An epoch is a mighty ugly customer to come to blows with. I remember Him of Galilee.

The genius of Rabelais was all instinct with this same *esprit gaulois*—a big, bold, virile spirit, breaking out in resounding guffaws, and crude, outspoken verities, equally unable and unwilling to soften down or gloss over anything, innocent of every species of periphrasis and affectation. It is genius in a merry mood rising above the petty conventionalities of speech,—often reminding us of Molière under like circumstances. Let fools be shocked, if they please; sensible men are ashamed only in presence of positive immorality and deliberate

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vice. The *esprit gaulois* is the spirit of primitive man going straight to its end, regardless of fetter or law. The *esprit français* is equally natural; but then it has acquired a certain degree of civilisation. It has less width of scope; it has learned the little concessions men are bound to make one another, having associated longer with them. It has left hodden grey, and taken to the silken doublet and cap of velvet, and rubs elbows with men of rank. It has lost nothing of its good sense and good temper; but it feels no longer bound in every case to blurt its thought right out; already it leaves something to be guessed at. It is all a question of civilisation and surroundings. But above and beyond this, it must be allowed to be conditioned by the essential distinction between genius and talent. The former does what it likes, 'tis lord and master; the latter is, by its very nature, a creature of compromise.

Brantôme possesses all the *verve* and brightness of a genuine Frenchman. All the conditions of life are highly favourable for him; he is rich and noble, while intelligence and wit are stamped on his very face. He wins his first spurs under François de Guise, whose protégé he is; when he has had enough of war, he comes to Court. There he receives the most flattering of receptions, every Catholic Noble extending him the hand of good fellowship. His family connections are such, that on the very steps of the throne is a voice ready to call him cousin, and a charming woman's lips to smile on him with favour. 'Tis a good start; henceforth it is for his moral and intellectual qualities to achieve the career so auspiciously begun.

As I have said already, Brantôme is the finished type of a Frenchman of quality. Well taught and witty, brave



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and enterprising, capable of appreciating honesty and worth whether in thought or deed, instinctively hating tyrants and tyrannical violence, and avoiding them like the plague, blessing the happy day on which his mother gave him birth, light-hearted and sceptical, he unites in himself everything that makes life go easy. Be sure no over-bearing passion will ever disturb the serenity of his existence. He has too much good sense to let his happiness depend on the chimerical figments of the imagination, and too much real courtesy ever to reproach a woman with her frailties. The world and all its ways seem good to him. In very truth, he is not far from Pangloss's conclusion,—Pangloss, the perfect type of what a man must be so as never to suffer,—“Well! well! all is for the best in this best of possible worlds.” If woman deceive, she offers so many compensations in other ways that 'tis a hundred times better to have her as she is than not at all. Men are sinners; again most true, as an abstract proposition, but if only we know how to regulate our conduct judiciously, their sinful spite will never touch us. Easy to see how, with this bent of character and these convictions, Brantôme was certain to find friendly faces wherever he went. The favourable impression his person and position had produced, his good sense completed.

The King took delight in the society of this finished gentleman with his easy and agreeable manners. In the midst of the numberless vexations he was surrounded by, one of his greatest distractions was the gay, lively conversation of this noble lord, from whom he had nothing to fear in the way of hostile speech or angry words. The Duc d'Alençon was another intimate, who putting aside

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for a moment his schemes of ambition, would hear and tell tales of love and intrigue, laughing the louder in proportion to the audacity and success of the trick played by the heroine. And so it was with all; the result being that Brantôme quickly acquired the repute of being the wittiest man in France. All men and all parties were on friendly terms with him. The Huguenots forgot he was a Catholic, and made an ally of him. Without religious fanaticism or personal ambition, honoured and sought after by the great, yet quite unspoiled and always simple-hearted and good-natured, equally free from prejudice and pride, he conciliated the good will of all. Throughout the whole of Brantôme's career, we never hear of his making a single enemy; and be it remembered he lived in the very hottest of the storm and stress, political and religious, of the Sixteenth Century. Let us add to complete our characterisation, a quite incalculable merit,—a discretion such as cannot be found even in the annals of Chivalry, a period indeed when lovers were only too fond of making a show of their ladies' favours. This is the one and only point where Brantôme is inconsistent with the true French type of character, mostly as eager to declare the fair inamorata's name as to appreciate the proofs of love she may have given.

Francis I. is but just dead, we must remember. His reign has been called the Renaissance, and not without good reason. Under him begins that light, graceful bearing, that elegance of manner, that politeness of address, which henceforth will make continuous advances to greater and greater refinement. Rabelais is the last expression of that old, unsoftened and unmitigated French speech, from which at a later date Matthieu Regnier will

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ocasionally borrow one of his picturesque phrases. In the same reign costume first becomes dainty. Men's minds grow finical like their dress; and a new mode of expression was imperatively required to match the new elegance of living. The change was effected almost without effort; 'twas a mere question of external sensibility. The body, now habituated to silk and velvet, grows more sensitive and delicate, and intellect and language follow suit. The correspondence was inevitable. So much for the mental revolution. As for the moral side, manners gained in frankness no doubt; but otherwise things were neither better nor worse than before. It has always seemed to us a strange proceeding, to take a particular period of History, as writers so often will, and declare,—‘At this epoch morals were more relaxed than ever before or since.’

Now under Francis I., and by his example, manners acquired a happy freedom, an unstudied ease, his Courtiers were sure to turn to good advantage. A King is always king of the fashion. Judging by the two celebrated lines<sup>1</sup> he wrote one day on a pane in one of the windows at the Castle of Chambord, Francis I., a Prince of wit and a true Frenchman, could discover no better way of punishing women for their fickleness and frivolity than that of copying their example. Every pretty woman stirred a longing to possess in the ample and facile heart of this Royal Don Juan. They were easy and happy loves,—without remorse and without bitterness, and never deformed with tears. So far did he push his rights as a Sovereign, that there is said to have been at least one instance of rivalry between him and his own

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son. He died, as he had lived, a lover,—and a victim to love.

Under Henri II., Diane de Poitiers is the most prominent figure on the stage; following the gallant leadership of the King's mistress, the Court continues the same mode of life and type of manners which distinguished the preceding reign.

Of the reign of Francis II., we need only speak *en passant*. During the short while he and Mary Stuart were exhausting the joys of a brief married life, there was no time for further change.

But now we come to a far more noteworthy and important period. While the Queen Mother and the Guises are silently preparing their *coup d'état*; while the Huguenots, light-hearted and unsuspecting, are dancing and making merry in the halls of the Louvre; while Catholics join them in merry feasts at the taverns then in vogue, and ladies allow no party spirit to intrude in their love affairs; while the Pré-aux-Clercs is the meeting-ground where men of honour settle their quarrels, and the happy man, the man who receives the most caressing marks of female favour, is he that has killed most, at a time like this the wits are keen and the spirit as reckless as the courage. With such a code of morals it was a difficult matter for any serious sentiment to survive. Women soon began to feel the same scorn of life that men professed. The strongest were falling day by day, and emotion and sensibility could not but be blunted. Then think of the crowd of eager candidates to seize the vacant reins of Government, and the steeple-chase existence of those days becomes intelligible and even excusable.

In all this movement Brantôme was necessarily in-

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volved, but he kept invariably in the back-ground, in a convenient semi-obscurity. But we must by no means assume that this prudence on the Vicomte de Bourdeille's part proceeded from any lack of energy; this would be doing him a quite undeserved injustice. He had given proofs of his courage; and Abbé as he was, his sword on hip spoke as proudly as the most doughty ruffler's. But a man of peace, he avoided provoking quarrels; he was a good Catholic, and Religion has always discountenanced the shedding of blood.

The best proof of the position he was able to win at Court is this Book of Fair and Gallant Ladies which has come down to us as its result. Amid all the gay and boisterous fêtes of the time, and the thousand lights of the Louvre, men and women both smiled graciously on our Author. His perfect discretion was perhaps his chief merit in the eyes of all these love-sick swains and garrulous young noodles. The instant a lover received an assignation from his fair one, his joy ran over in noisy fanfaronnades. A happy man is brim full of good-fellowship, and eager for a confidant. Well! if at that moment the gallant Abbé chanced to pass, what more natural than for the fortunate gentleman to seize and buttonhole him? Then he would recount his incomparable good fortune, adding a hundred piquant details, and drunk with his own babbling, enumerate one after the other the most minute particulars of his intrigue, ending by letting out the name of the husband at whose expense he had been enjoying himself. Love is so simple-minded and so charmingly selfish! Every lover seriously thinks each casual acquaintance must of course sympathise actively in his feelings. A bosom friend he must have!—no matter

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who, if only he can tell him, always of course under formal promise of concealment, the secret he should have kept locked in his own bosom. Nor should we look over harshly on this weakness; too much happiness, no less than too much unhappiness, will stifle the bosom that cannot throw off any of its load upon another. 'Tis the world-old story of the reeds and the secret that must be told. Self-expansion is a natural craving; without it, men grow misanthropes and die of an aneurism of the heart.

This brings us to the book of the *Dames galantes*. When eventually he retired to his estates, Brantôme took up the pen as a relief to his ennui. Among all the works he composed, this one must certainly have pleased him best, because it so exactly corresponds with his own character and ways of thought. But to write these lives of Gallant Ladies was an enterprise not without its dangers. A volume of anecdotes of the sort cannot be written without there being considerable risk in the process of falling into the coarse and commonplace vulgarities that surround such a subject. Style, wit, philosophy, gaiety, all in a degree seldom met with, were indispensable for success; yet Brantôme has succeeded. This book, of the *Vies des Dames galantes*, offers a close analogy with another celebrated study in the same *genre*, viz., Balzac's *Physiologie du mariage*. Both works deal with the same subject, the ways and wiles of women, married, widow and maid, under the varying conditions of, (1) the Sixteenth Century, and (2) the Present Day. But the mode of treatment is different; and this difference made Brantôme's task a harder one than the modern Author's. His short stories of a dozen lines, each revealing woman in

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one of those secret and confidential situations only open to the eye of husband or lover, might easily be displeasing, or worse still tiresome. Brantôme has avoided all these shoals and shallows. Each little tale has its own interest, always fresh and bright.

Moreover a lofty morality runs through the narratives. At first sight the word morality may seem a joke applied to such matters; but it is easy to disconcert the scoffer merely by asking him to read our Author. To support my contention, there is no need to quote any particular story or stories; all alike have their charm, and the work must be perused in its entirety to appreciate the truth of the high praise I give it. Every reader, on finally closing the book, cannot but feel a genuine enthusiasm. The delicate wit of the whole recital passes imagination. On every page we meet some physical trait or some moral remark that rivets the attention. The author puts his hand on some curiosity or perversity, and instantly stops to examine it; while at the same time the propriety of his tone allures the most sedate reader. The discussion of each point, in which the *pros* and *cons* are always balanced one against the other in the wittiest and most thorough manner, is interesting to the highest degree. In one word the book is a code and compendium of Love. All is classified, studied, analysed; each argument is supported by an appropriate anecdote,—an example,—a Life.

The mere arrangement of the contents displays consummate skill. The Author has divided his *Vies des Dames galantes* into seven Discourses, as follows:

In the First, he treats "Of ladies which do make love, and their husbands cuckolds;"

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In the Second, he expatiates "On the question which doth give the more content in love, whether touching, seeing or speaking;"

In the Third, he speaks "Concerning the Beauty of a fine leg, and the virtue the same doth possess;"

In the Fourth, he discourses "Concerning old dames as fond to practise love as ever the young ones be;"

In the Fifth, he tells "How Fair and honourable ladies do love brave and valiant men, and brave men courageous women;"

In the Sixth, he teaches, "How we should never speak ill of ladies,—and of the consequences of so doing;"

In the Seventh, he asks, "Concerning married women, widows and maids—which of these be better than the other to love."

This list of subjects, displaying as it does, all the leading ideas of the book, leaves me little to add. I have no call to go into a detailed appreciation of the Work under its manifold aspects as a gallery of portraits; my task was merely to judge of its general physiognomy and explain its *raison d'être*; and this I have attempted to do.

I will only add by way of conclusion a few words to show the especial esteem we should feel for Brantôme on this ground, that his works contain nothing to corrupt good morals. Each narrative is told simply and straightforwardly, for what it is worth. The author neither embellishes nor exaggerates. Moreover the species of corollary he clinches it with is a philosophical and physiological deduction of the happiest and most apposite kind in the great majority of instances,—some witty and



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ingenious remark that never offends either against good sense or good taste. If now and again the reader is tempted to shy, he should in justice put this down to the diction of the time, which had not yet adopted that tone of arrogant virtue it nowadays affects. Then there was a large number of words in former days which connoted nothing worse than something ridiculous and absurd.

Then as to beauty of language, we must go roundabout ways to reach many a point they marched straight to in old days. Brantôme at any rate is a purist of style,—one of the most striking and most correct writers I have ever read. It is a great and genuine discovery readers will make, if they do not know him already; if they do, they will be renewing acquaintance with an old friend, at once witty and delightful. In either case, 'tis a piece of luck not to be despised.

H. VIGNEAU.

**LIVES OF FAIR AND  
GALLANT LADIES**

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## FIRST DISCOURSE

*Of Ladies which do make Love, and their Hubbands  
cuckolds.<sup>1</sup>*

1.



BEING 'tis the ladies have laid the foundation of all cuckoldry, and how 'tis they which do make all men cuckolds, I have thought it good to include this First Discourse in my present Book of Fair Ladies,—albeit that I shall have occasion to speak therein as much of men as of women. I know right well I am taking up a great work, and one I should never get done withal, if that I did insist on full completeness of the same. For of a truth not all the paper in the Records Office of Paris would hold in writing the half of the histories of folk in this case, whether women or men. Yet will I set down what I can; and when I can no more, I will e'en give my pen—to the devil, or mayhap to some good fellow-comrade, which shall carry on the tale.

Furthermore must I crave indulgence if in this Discourse I keep not due order and alignment, for indeed so great is the multitude of men and women so situate, and

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so manifold and divers their condition, that I know not any Commander and Master of War so skilled as that he could range the same in proper rank and meet array.

Following therefore of mine own fantasy, will I speak of them in such fashion as pleaseth me,—now in this present month of April, the which bringeth round once more the very season and open time of *cuckoos*; I mean the cuckoos that perch on trees, for of the other sort are to be found and seen enough and to spare in all months and seasons of the year.

Now of this sort of cuckolds, there be many of divers kinds, but of all sorts the worst and that which the ladies fear above all others, doth consist of those wild, fierce, tricky, ill-conditioned, malicious, cruel and suspicious husbands, who strike, torture and kill, some for true cause, others for no true reason at all, so mad and furious doth the very least suspicion in the world make them. With such all dealings are very carefully to be shunned, both by their wives and by the lovers of the same. Natheless have I known ladies and their lovers which did make no account of them; for they were just as ill-minded as the others, and the ladies were bold and reckless, to such a degree that if their cavaliers chanced to fail of courage, themselves would supply them enough and to spare for both. The more so that in proportion as any emprise is dangerous and difficult, ought it to be undertaken in a bold and high spirit. On the contrary I have known other ladies of the sort who had no heart at all or ambition to adventure high endeavours; but cared for naught but their low pleasures, even as the proverb hath it: *base of heart as an harlot*.

Myself knew an honourable lady, and a great one, who

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a good opportunity offering to have enjoyment of her lover, when this latter did object to her the incommodity that would ensue supposing the husband, who was not far off, to discover it, made no more ado but left him on the spot, deeming him no doughty lover, for that he said nay to her urgent desire. For indeed this is what an amorous dame, whenas the ardour and frenzy of desire would fain be satisfied, but her lover will not or cannot content her straightway, by reason of sundry lets and hindrances, doth hate and indignantly abominate above all else.

Needs must we commend this lady for her doughtiness, and many another of her kidney, who fear naught, if only they may content their passions, albeit therein they run more risks and dangers than any soldier or sailor doth in the most hazardous perils of field or sea.

A Spanish dame, escorted one day by a gallant cavalier through the rooms of the King's Palace and happening to pass by a particular dark and secret recess, the gentleman, piquing himself on his respect for women and his Spanish discretion, saith to her: *Señora, buen lugar, si no fuera vuessa merced* (A good place, my lady, if it were another than your ladyship). To this the lady merely answered the very same words back again, *Sí, buen lugar, si no fuera vuessa merced* (Yes, Sir, a good place, if it were another than your lordship). Thus did she imply his cowardliness, and rebuke the same, for that he had not taken of her in so good a place what she did wish and desire to lose, as another and a bolder man would have done in like case. For the which cause she did thereupon altogether pretermitt her former love for him, and left him incontinently.

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I have heard tell of a very fair and honourable lady, who did make assignation with her lover, only on condition he should not touch her (nor come to extremities at all). This the other accomplished, tarrying all night long in great ecstasy, temptation and continence; and thereat was the lady so grateful that some while after she did give him full gratification, alleging for reason that she had been fain to prove his love in accomplishing the task she had laid upon him. Wherefore she did love him much thereafter, and afforded him opportunity to do quite other feats than this one,—verily one of the hardest sort to succeed in.

Some there be will commend his discretion,—or timidity, if you had rather call it so,—others not. For myself I refer the question to such as may debate the point on this side or on that according to their several humours and predispositions.

I knew once a lady, and one of no low degree, who having made an assignation with her lover to come and stay with her one night, he hied him thither all ready, in shirt only, to do his duty. But, seeing it was in winter-tide, he was so sorely a-cold on the way, that he could accomplish naught, and thought of no other thing but to get heat again. Whereat the lady did loathe the caitiff, and would have no more of him.

Another lady, discoursing of love with a gentleman, he said to her among other matters that if he were with her, he would undertake to do his devoir six times in one night, so greatly would her beauty edge him on. "You boast most high prowess," said she; "I make you assignation therefore" for such and such a night. Nor did she fail to keep tryst at the time agreed; but lo! to his un-

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doing, he was assailed by so sad a convulsion, that he could by no means accomplish his devoir so much as once even. Whereupon the fair lady said to him, "What! are you good for naught at all? Well, then! begone out of my bed. I did never lend it you, like a bed at an inn, to take your ease forsooth therein and rest yourself. Therefore, I say, begone!" Thus did she drive him forth, and thereafter did make great mock of him, hating the recreant worse than the plague.

This last gentleman would have been happy enough, if only he had been of the complexion of the great Baraud, Protonotary and Almoner to King Francis, for whenas he lay with the Court-ladies, he would even reach the round dozen at the least, and yet next morning he would say right humbly, "I pray you, Madam, make excuse that I have not done better, but I took physic yesterday." I have myself known him of later years, when he was called Captain Baraud, a Gascon, and had quitted the lawyer's robe. He has recounted to me, at my asking, his amours, and that name by name.

As he waxed older, this masculine vigour and power somewhat failed him. Moreover he was now poor, albeit he had had good pickings, the which his prowess had gotten him; yet had he squandered it all, and was now set to compounding and distilling essences. "But verily," he would say, "if only I could now, so well as once I could in my younger days, I should be in better case, and should guide my gear better than I have done."

During the famous War of the League, an honourable gentleman, and a right brave and valiant soldier, having left the place whereof he was Governor to go to the wars, could not on his return arrive in garrison before night-



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fall, and so betook himself to the house of a fair and very honourable and noble widow, who straight invited him to stay the night within doors. This he gladly consented to do, for he was exceeding weary. After making him good cheer at supper, she gives him her own chamber and bed, seeing that all the other bed-chambers were dismantled by reason of the War, and their furniture,—and she had good and fair plenishing,—under lock and key. Herself meanwhile withdraws to her closet, where she had a day-bed in use.

The gentleman, after several times refusing this bed and bed-chamber, was constrained by the good lady's prayers to take it. Then so soon as he was laid down therein and asleep most soundly, lo! the lady slips in softly and lays herself down beside him in the bed without his being ware of aught all the night long, so awearry was he and heavily asleep. There lay he till broad daylight, when the lady, drawing away from him, as the sleeper began to awake, said, "You have not slept without company; for I would not yield you up the whole of my bed, so have I enjoyed the one half thereof as well as ever you have the other. You have lost a chance you will never have again."

The gentleman, cursing and railing for spite of his wasted opportunity ('twere enough to make a man hang himself), was fain to stay her and beg her over. But no such thing! On the contrary, she was sorely displeased at him for not having contented her as she would have had him do, for of a truth she had not come thither for only one poor embrace,—as the saying hath it, one embrace is only the salad of a feast. She loved the plural

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number better than the singular, as do many worthy dames.

Herein they differ from a certain very fair and honourable lady I once knew, who on one occasion having made assignation with her lover to come and stay with her, in a twinkling he did accomplish three good embraces with her. But thereafter, he wishing to do a fourth and make his number yet complete, she did urge him with prayers and commands to get up and retire. He, as fresh as at first, would fain renew the combat, and doth promise he would fight furiously all that night long till dawn of day, declaring that for so little as had gone by, his vigour was in no wise diminished. But she did reply: "Be satisfied I have recognized your doughtiness and good dispositions. They are right fair and good, and at a better time and place I shall know very well how to take better advantage of them than at this present. For naught but some small illhap is lacking for you and me to be discovered. Farewell then till a better and more secure occasion, and then right freely will I put you to the great battle, and not to such a trifling encounter as this."

Many dames there be would not have shown this much prudency, but intoxicate with pleasure, seeing they had the enemy already on the field, would have had him fight till dawn of day.

The same honourable lady which I spake of before these last, was of such a gallant humour that when the caprice was on her, she had never a thought or fear of her husband, albeit he was a ready swordsman and quick at offence. Natheless hath she alway been so fortunate as that neither she nor her lovers have ever run serious risks of their lives or come near being surprised, by dint

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of careful posting of guards and good and watchful sentinels.

Still it behoves not ladies to trust too much to this, for one unlucky moment is all that is needed to ruin all,—as happened some while since to a certain brave and valiant gentleman<sup>2</sup> who was massacred on his way to see his mistress by the treachery and contrivance of the lady herself, the which her husband made her devise against him. Alas! if he had not entertained so high a presumption of his own worth and valour as he rightly did, he would have kept better guard, and would never have fallen,—more's the pity! A capital example, verily, not to trust over much to amorous dames, who to escape the cruel hand of their husbands, do play such a game as these order them, as did the lady in this case, who saved her own life,—at the sacrifice of her lover's.

Other husbands there be who kill the lady and the lover both together as I have heard it told of a very great lady whose husband was jealous of her, not for any offence he had certain knowledge of, but out of mere suspiciousness and mistaken zeal of love. He did his wife to death with poison and wasting sickness,—a grievous thing and an exceeding sad, after having first slain the lover, a good and honourable man, declaring that the sacrifice was fairer and more agreeable to kill the bull first, and the cow afterwards.

This same Prince was more cruel to his wife than he was later to one of his daughters, the which he had married to a great Prince, though not so great an one as himself was, he being indeed a monarch in all but name.

It fell out to this fickle dame to be gotten with child by another than her husband, who was at the time busied

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afar in some War. Presently, having been brought to bed of a fine child, she wist not to what Saint to make appeal, if not to her father; so to him she did reveal all by the mouth of a gentleman she had trust in, whom she sent to him. No sooner had he hearkened to his confidence than he did send and charge her husband that, for his life, he should beware to make no essay against that of his daughter, else would he do the same against his, and make him the poorest Prince in Christendom, the which he was well able to accomplish. Moreover he did despatch for his daughter a galley with a meet escort to fetch to him the child and its nurse, and providing a good house and livelihood, had the boy nourished and brought up right well. But when after some space of time the father came to die, thereupon the husband put her to death and so did punish her for her faithlessness at last.

I have heard tell of another husband who did to death the lover before the eyes of his wife, causing him to languish in long pain, to the end she might die in a martyr's agony to see the lingering death of him she had so loved and had held within her arms.

Yet another great nobleman did kill his wife openly before the whole Court.<sup>s</sup> For the space of fifteen years he had granted the same all liberty, and had been for long while well aware of her ill ways, having many a time and oft remonstrated thereat and admonished her. However at the last a sudden caprice took him ('tis said at the instance of a great Prince, his master), and on a certain morning he did visit her as she still lay abed, but on the point of rising. Then, after lying with her, and after sporting and making much mirth together, he did give her four or five dagger thrusts. This done, he bade a

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servant finish her, and after had her laid on a litter, and carried openly before all the Court to his own house, to be there buried. He would fain have done the like to her paramours; but so would he have had overmuch on his hands, for that she had had so many they might have made a small army.

I have heard speak likewise of a certain brave and valiant Captain,<sup>4</sup> who conceiving some suspicion of his wife, went straight to her without more ado and strangled her himself with his own hands, in her white girdle. Thereafter he had her buried with all due honour, and himself was present at her obsequies in mourning weeds and of a very sad countenance, the which mourning he did continue for many a long day,—verily a noble satisfaction to the poor lady, as if a fine funeral could bring her to life again! Moreover he did the same by a damosel which had been in waiting on his wife and had aided and abetted her in her naughtiness. Nor yet did he die without issue by this same wife, for he had of her a gallant son, one of the bravest and foremost soldiers of his country, who by virtue of his worth and emprise did reach great honour as having served his Kings and masters right well.

I have heard likewise of a nobleman in Italy which also slew his wife, not being able to catch her gallant who had escaped into France. But it is said he slew her, not so much because of her sin,—for that he had been ware of for a long time, how she indulged in loose love and took no heed for aught else,—as in order to wed another lady of whom he was enamoured.

Now this is why it is very perilous to assail and attack an armed and defended spot,—not but that there be as

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many of this sort assailed and right well assailed as of unarmed and undefended ones, yea! and assailed victoriously to boot. For an example whereof, I know of one that was as well armed and championed as any in all the world. Yet, was there a certain gentleman, in sooth a most brave and valiant soldier, who was fain to hanker after the same; nay! he was not content with this, but must needs pride himself thereon and bruit his success abroad. But it was scarce any time at all before he was incontinently killed by men appointed to that end, without otherwise causing scandal, and without the lady's suffering aught therefrom. Yet was she for long while in sore fear and anguish of spirit, seeing that she was then with child and firmly believing that after her bringing to bed, the which she would full fain have seen put off for an hundred years, she would meet the like fate. But the husband showed himself a good and merciful man,—though of a truth he was one of the keenest swordsmen in all the world,—and freely pardoned her; and nothing else came of it, albeit divers of them that had been her servants were in no small affright. However the one victim paid for all. And so the lady, recognizing the goodness and graciousness of such an husband, gave but very little cause for suspicion thereafter, for that she joined herself to the ranks of the more wise and virtuous dames of that day.

It fell out very different not many years since in the Kingdom of Naples to Donna Maria d'Avalos, one of the fair Princesses of that land and married to the Prince of Venusia, who was enamoured of the Count d'Andriane, likewise one of the noble Princes of the country. So being both of them come together to enjoy their passion,

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and the husband having discovered it,—by means whereof I could render an account, but the tale would be over long,—having insooth surprised them there together, had the twain of them slain by men appointed thereto. In such wise that next morning the fair and noble pair, unhappy beings, were seen lying stretched out and exposed to public view on the pavement in front of the house door, all dead and cold, in sight of all passers-by, who could not but weep and lament over their piteous lot.

Now there were kinsfolk of the said lady, thus done to death, who were exceeding grieved and greatly angered thereat, so that they were right eager to avenge the same by death and murder, as the law of that country doth allow. But for as much as she had been slain by base-born varlets and slaves who deserved not to have their hands stained with so good and noble blood, they were for making this point alone the ground of their resentment and for this seeking satisfaction from the husband, whether by way of justice or otherwise,—but not so, if he had struck the blow with his own hand. For that had been a different case, not so imperatively calling for satisfaction.

Truly an odd idea and a most foolish quibble have we here! Whereon I make appeal to our great orators and wise lawyers, that they tell me this: which act is the more monstrous, for a man to kill his wife with his own hand, the which hath so oftentimes loved and caressed her, or by that of a base-born slave? In truth there are many good arguments to be alleged on the point; but I will refrain me from adducing of them, for fear they prove over weak and silly in comparison of those of such great folk.

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I have heard tell that the Viceroy, hearing of the plot that was toward, did warn the lover thereof, and the lady to boot. But their destiny would have it so; this was to be the issue, and no other, of their so delightful loves.

This lady was daughter of Don Carlo d'Avalos, second brother of the Marquis di Pescaïra, to whom if any had played a like trick in any of his love matters wherewith I am acquaint, be sure he would have been dead this many a long day.

I once knew an husband, which coming home from abroad and having gone long without sleeping with his wife, did arrive with mind made up and glad heart to do so with her presently, and having good pleasure thereof. But arriving by night, he did hear by his little spy, how that she was accompanied by her lover in the bed. Thereupon did he straight lay hand on sword, and knocked at the door; the which being opened, he entered in resolved to kill her. After first of all hunting for the gallant, who had escaped by the window, he came near to his wife to kill her; but it so happened she was on this occasion so becomingly tricked out, so featly dressed in her night attire and her fair white shift, and so gaily decked (bear in mind she had taken all this pretty pains with herself the better to please her lover), that he had never found her so much to his taste. Then she, falling at his knees, in her shift as she was, and grovelling on the ground, did ask his forgiveness with such fair and gentle words, the which insooth she knew right well how to set forth, that raising her up and seeing her so fair and of so gracious mien, he felt his heart stir within him, and dropping his sword,—for that he had had no enjoyment for many a day and was anhungered therefor, which likely enough



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did stir the lady too at nature's prompting,—he forgave her and took and kissed her, and put her back to bed again, and in a twinkling lay down with her, after shutting to the door again. And the fair lady did content him so well by her gentle ways and pretty cajoleries,—be sure she forgot not any one of them all,—that eventually the next morning they were found better friends than ever, and never was so much loving and caressing between them before. As was the case likewise with King Menelaus, that poor cuckold, the which did ever by the space of ten or twelve years threaten his wife Helen that he would kill her, if ever he could put hands upon her, and even did tell her so, calling from the foot of Troy's wall to her on the top thereof. Yet, Troy well taken, and she fallen into his power, so ravished was he with her beauty that he forgave her all, and did love and fondle her in better sort than ever.

So much then for these savage husbands that from lions turn into butterflies. But no easy thing is it for any to get deliverance like her whose case we now tell.

A lady, young, fair and noble, in the reign of King Francis I., married to a great Lord of France, of as noble a house as is any to be found, did escape otherwise, and in more pious fashion, than the last named. For, whether it were she had given some cause for suspicion to her husband, or that he was overtaken by a fit of distrust or sudden anger, he came at her sword in hand for to kill her. But she bethought herself instantly to make a vow to the glorious Virgin Mary, and to promise she would to pay her said vow, if only she would save her life, at her chapel of Loretto at St. Jean des Mauverets, in the country of Anjou. And so soon as ever she had made



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this vow in her own mind, lo! the said Lord did fall to the ground, and his sword slipped from out his hand. Then presently, rising up again as if awaking from a dream, he did ask his wife to what Saint she had recommended herself to escape out of this peril. She told him it was to the Blessed Virgin, in her afore-named Chapel, and how she had promised to visit the holy place. Whereupon he said to her: "Go thither then, and fulfil your vow,"—the which she did, and hung up there a picture recording the story, together with sundry large and fair votive offerings of wax, such as of yore were customary for this purpose, the which were there to be seen for long time after. Verily a fortunate vow, and a right happy and unexpected escape,—as is further set forth in the *Chronicles of Anjou*.<sup>5</sup>

### 2.



HAVE heard say how King Francis<sup>1</sup> once was fain to go to bed with a lady of his Court whom he loved. He found her husband sword in fist ready to kill him; but the King straightway did put his own to his throat, and did charge him, on his life, to do him no hurt, but an if he should do him the least ill in the world, how that he would kill him on the spot, or else have his head cut off. So for that night did he send him forth the house, and took his place. The said lady was very fortunate to have found so good a champion and protector of her person, for never after durst the husband to say one word of complaint, and so left her to do as she well pleased.

I have heard tell how that not this lady alone, but

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many another beside, did win suchlike safeguard and protection from the King. As many folk do in War-time to save their lands, putting of the King's cognizance over their doors, even so do these ladies put the countersign of their monarchs inside and out their bodies; whereby their husbands dare not afterward say one word of reproach, who but for this would have given them incontinently to the edge of the sword.

I have known yet other ladies, favoured in this wise by kings and great princes, who did so carry their passports everywhere. Natheless were there some of them, whose husbands, albeit not daring to use cold steel to them, did yet have resort to divers poisons and secret ways of death, making pretence these were catarrhs, or apoplexy and sudden death. Verily such husbands are odious,—so to see their fair wives lying by their side, sickening and dying a slow death day after day, and do deserve death far worse than their dames. Others again do them to death between four walls, in perpetual imprisonment. Of such we have instances in sundry ancient Chronicles of France; and myself have known a great nobleman of France, the which did thus slay his wife, who was a very fair and honourable lady,—and this by judgement of the Courts, taking an infatuate delight in having by this means his cuckoldry publicly declared.

Among husbands of this mad and savage temper under cuckoldry, old men hold the first place, who distrusting their own vigour and heat of body, and bent on making sure of their wives' virtue, even when they have been so foolish as to marry young and beautiful ones, so jealous and suspicious are they of the same (as well by reason of their natural disposition as of their former doings

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in this sort, the which they have either done themselves of yore or seen done by others), that they lead the unhappy creatures so miserable a life that scarce could Purgatory itself be in any wise more cruel.

The Spanish proverb saith: *El diablo sabe mucho, porque es viejo*, "The devil knoweth much, because he is old"; and in like sort these old men, by reason of their age and erstwhile habitudes, know full many things. Thus are they greatly to be blamed on this point, for seeing they cannot satisfy their wives, why do they go about to marry them at all? Likewise are the women, being so fair and young, very wrong to marry old men under temptation of wealth, thinking they will enjoy the same after their death, the which they do await from hour to hour. And meanwhile do they make good cheer with young gallants whom they make friends of, for the which some of them do suffer sorely.

I have heard speak of one who, being surprised in the act, her husband, an old man, did give her a certain poison whereby she lay sick for more than a year, and grew dry as a stick. And the husband would go oft to see her, and took delight in that her sickness, and made mirth thereat, declaring she had gotten her deserts.

Yet another her husband shut her up in a room, and put her on bread and water, and very oft would he make her strip stark naked and whip her his fill, taking no pity on that fair naked flesh, and feeling no compunction thereat. And truly this is the worst of them, for seeing they be void of natural heat, and as little subject to temptation as a marble statue, no beauty doth stir their compassion, but they satiate their rage with cruel martyrdoms; whereas if that they were younger, they would

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take their satisfaction on their victim's fair naked body, and so forget and forgive, as I have told of in a previous place.

This is why it is ill to marry suchlike ill-conditioned old men; for of a truth, albeit their sight is failing and coming to naught from old age, yet have they always enough to spy out and see the tricks their young wives may play them.

Even so have I heard speak of a great lady who was used to say that never a Saturday was without sun, never a beautiful woman without amours, and never an old man without his being jealous; and indeed everything goeth for the enfeeblement of his vigour.

This is why a great Prince whom I know was wont to say: that he would fain be like the lion, the which, grow he as old as he may, doth never get white; or the monkey, which, the more he performeth, the more he hath desire to perform; or the dog, for the older he waxeth, the bigger doth he become; or else the stag, forasmuch as the more aged he is, the better can he accomplish his duty, and the does will resort more willingly to him than to the younger members of the herd.

And indeed, to speak frankly, as I have heard a great personage of rank say likewise, what reason is there, or what power hath the husband so great that he may and ought to kill his wife, seeing he hath none such from God, neither by His law nor yet His holy Gospel, but only to put her away? He saith naught therein of murder, and bloodshedding, naught of death, tortures or imprisonment, of poisons or cruelties. Ah! but our Lord Jesus Christ did well admonish us that great wrong was in these fashions of doing and these murders, and that He did hardly

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or not at all approve thereof, whenas they brought to Him the poor woman accused of adultery, for that He might pronounce her doom and punishment. He said only to them, writing with His finger on the ground: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,"—the which not one of them all durst do, feeling themselves touched to the quick by so wise and gentle a rebuke.

Our Creator was for teaching us all not to be so lightly ready to condemn folk and put them to death, even on this count, well knowing the weakness of our human Nature, and the violent errors some do commit against it. For such an one doth cause his wife to be put to death, who is more an adulterer than she, while others again often have their wives slain though innocent, being awearry of them and desiring to take other fresh ones. How many such there be! Yet doth Saint Augustine say that the adulterous man is as much to be punished as the woman.

I have heard speak of a very great Prince, and of high place in the world, who suspecting his wife of false love with a certain gallant cavalier, had him assassinated as he came forth by night from his Palace, and afterward the lady. A little while before, this latter at a Tourney that was held at Court, after fixedly gazing at her lover who did manage his horse right gracefully, said suddenly: "Great Lord! how well he doth ride!" "Yea!" was the unexpected answer, "but he rides too high an horse"; and in short time after was he poisoned by means of certain perfumes or by some draught he swallowed by way of the mouth.

I knew a Lord of a good house who did kill his wife, the which was very fair and of good family and lineage, poi-

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soning her by her private parts, without her being ware of it, so subtle and cunningly compounded was the said poison. This did he in order to marry a great lady who before had been wife to a Prince, without the influence and protection of whose friends he was in sad case, exposed to imprisonment and danger. However as his ill-luck would have it, he did not marry her after all, but was disappointed therein and brought into very evil repute, and ill looked at by all men and honourable ladies.

I have seen high personages greatly blame our old-time Kings, such as Louis X. (le Hutin, the Obstinate) and Charles the Fair, for that they did to death their wives,—the one Marguérite, daughter of Robert Duke of Burgundy, the other Blanche, daughter of Othelin Count of Burgundy, casting up against them their adulteries. So did they have them cruelly done to death within the four walls of the Château-Gaillard, as did likewise the Comte de Foix to Jeanne d'Arthoys. Wherein was not so much guilt or such heinous crimes as they would have had men to believe; but the truth is the said monarchs were aweary of their wives, and so did bring up against them these fine charges, and after did marry others.

As in yet another case, did King Henry of England have his wife put to death and beheaded, to wit Anne Boleyn, in order to marry another, for that he was a monarch very ready to shed blood and quick to change his wives. Were it not better that they should divorce them, according to God's word, than thus cruelly cause them to be slain? But no! they must needs ever have fresh meat these folk, who are fain to sit at table apart without inviting any to share with them, or else to have new and fresh wives to bring them gear after that they

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have wasted that of their first spouses, or else have not gotten of these enough to satisfy them. Thus did Baldwyn,<sup>2</sup> second King of Jerusalem, who making it to be believed of his first wife that she had played him false, did put her away, in order to take a daughter of the Duke of Malyterne,<sup>3</sup> because she had a large sum of money for dowry, whereof he stood in sore need. This is to be read in the *History of the Holy Land*.<sup>4</sup> Truly it well becomes these Princes to alter the Law of God and invent a new one, to the end they may make away with their unhappy wives!

King Louis VII. (Le Jeune, the Young) <sup>5</sup> did not precisely so in regard to Leonore, duchesse d'Acquitaine, who being suspected of adultery, mayhap falsely, during his voyaging in Syria, was repudiated by him on his sole authority, without appealing to the law of other men, framed as it is and practised more by might than by right or reason. Whereby he did win greater reputation than the other Kings named above, and the name of good, while the others were called wicked, cruel and tyrannical, forasmuch as he had in his soul some traces of remorse and truth. And this forsooth is to live a Christian life! Why! the heathen Romans themselves did for the most part herein behave more Christianly; and above all sundry of their Emperors, of whom the more part were subject to be cuckolds, and their wives exceeding lustful and whorish. Yet cruel as they were, we read of many who did rid themselves of their wives more by divorces than by murders such as we that are Christians do commit.

Julius Caesar did no further hurt to his wife Pompeia, but only divorced her, who had done adultery with Publius



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Clodius, a young and handsome Roman nobleman. For being madly in love with her, and she with him, he did spy out the opportunity when one day she was performing a sacrifice in her house, to which only women were admitted. So he did dress himself as a girl, for as yet had he no beard on chin, and joining in the singing and playing of instruments and so passing muster, had leisure to do that he would with his mistress. However, being presently recognized, he was driven forth and brought to trial, but by dint of bribery and influence was acquitted, and no more came of the thing.

Cicero expended his Latin in vain in a fine speech he did deliver against him. True it is that Caesar, wishful of convincing the public who would have him deem his wife innocent, did reply that he desired his bed not alone to be unstained with guilt, but free from all suspicion. This was well enough by way of so satisfying the world; but in his soul he knew right well what the thing meant, his wife being thus found with her lover. Little doubt she had given him the assignation and opportunity; for herein, when the woman doth wish and desire it, no need for the lover to trouble his head to devise means and occasions; for verily will she find more in an hour than all the rest of us men together would be able to contrive in an hundred years. As saith a certain lady of rank of mine acquaintance, who doth declare to her lover: "Only do you find means to make me *wish* to come, and never fear! I will find ways enough."

Caesar moreover knew right well the measure of these matters, for himself was a very great debauchee, and was known by the title of the *cock for all hens*. Many a husband did he make cuckold in his city, as witness the nick-

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name given him by his soldiers at his Triumph in the verse they did sing thereat: *Romani, servate uxores; moechum adducimus calvum,*

(Romans, look well to your wives, for we bring you the bald-headed fornicator, who will debauch 'em every one.)

See then how that Caesar by this wise and cunning answer he made about his wife, did shake himself free of bearing himself the name of cuckold, the which he made so many others to endure. But in his heart, he knew for all that how that he was galled to the quick.

3.



CTAVIUS CAESAR<sup>1</sup> likewise did put away his wife Scribonia for the sake of his own lecherousness, without other cause, though at the same time without doing her any other hurt, albeit she had good excuse to make him cuckold, by reason of an infinity of ladies that he had relations with. Indeed before their husbands' very faces he would openly lead them away from table at those banquets he was used to give them; then presently, after doing his will with them, would send them back again with hair dishevelled and disordered, and red ears,—a sure sign of what they had been at! Not that myself did ever elsewhere hear tell of this last as a distinctive mark whereby to discover such doings; a red face for a certainty have I heard so spoken of, but red ears never. So he did gain the repute of being exceeding lecherous, and even Mark Antony reproached him therewith; but he was used to excuse himself, saying he did not so much

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go with these ladies for mere wantonness, as thereby to discover more easily the secrets of their husbands, whom he did distrust.

I have known not a few great men and others, which have done after the same sort and have sought after ladies with this same object, wherein they have had good hap. Indeed I could name sundry which have adopted this good device; for good it is, as yielding a twofold pleasure. In this wise was Catiline's conspiracy discovered by the means of a courtesan.

The same Octavius was once seriously minded to put to death his daughter Julia, wife of Agrippa, for that she had been a notorious harlot, and had wrought great shame to him,—for verily sometimes daughters do bring more dishonour on their fathers than wives on their husbands. Still he did nothing more than banish her the country, and deprive of the use of wine and the wearing of fine clothing, compelling her to wear poor folk's dress, by way of signal punishment, as also of the society of men. And this is in sooth a sore deprivation for women of this kidney, to rob them of the two last named gratifications!

Another Emperor, and very cruel tyrant, Caligula,<sup>3</sup> did suspect that his wife, Livia Hostilia, had by stealth cheated him of sundry of her favours, and bestowed the same on her first husband, Caius Piso, from whom he had taken her away by force. This last was still alive, and was deemed to have received of her some pleasure and gratification of her fair body, the while the Emperor was away on a journey. Yet did he not indulge his usual cruelty toward her, but only banished her from him, two

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years after he had first taken her from her husband Piso and married her.

He did the same to Tullia Paulina, whom he had taken from her husband Caius Memmius. He exiled her and that was all, but in this case with the express prohibition to have naught to do at all with the gentle art of love, neither with any other men nor yet with her husband—truly a cruel and rigorous order so far as the last was concerned!

I have heard speak of a Christian Prince, and a great one, who laid the same prohibition on a lady whom he affected, and on her husband likewise, by no means to touch her, so jealous was he of her favours.

Claudius,<sup>3</sup> son of Drusus Germanicus, merely put away his wife Plautia Urgulanilla, for having shown herself a most notorious harlot, and what is worse, for that he had heard how she had made an attempt upon his life. Yet cruel as he was, though surely these two reasons were enough to lead him to put her to death, he was content with divorce only.

Then again, for how long a time did he endure the wild doings and filthy debaucheries of Valeria Messalina, his second wife, who was not content with doing it with one and another here and there in dissolute and abandoned sort, but made it her regular practice to go to the brothels to get gratification of her passions, like the biggest strumpet in all the city. So far did she go, as Juvenal doth describe, that so soon as ever her husband was to bed with her, she would slip lightly away from beside him, when she saw him fast asleep and disguising herself the best she could, would hie her to some common brothel, where she took all she could get, and still would

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retire weary rather than replete or satisfied. Nay! she did even worse. For her better contentment, and to win the repute and self-satisfaction of being a good harlot and accomplished light-o'-love, she did even ask for payment, and would tax each round and each several act, like a travelling cess-collector, to the last doit.

I have heard speak of a lady of the great world, and of no mean lineage neither, who for some while did follow the same life, and went thus to the common brothels in disguise, to make trial of this way of existence, and get gratification of her passions,—so much so that one night the town-guard, while making their rounds, did actually arrest her unwittingly. And indeed there be other ladies too which play these pranks, as is well enough known.

Boccaccio 'in his book of "Great Folks that have been Unhappy," doth speak of this Messalina in gentle terms, and representeth her making excuse for her ill behaviour, forasmuch as she was born by nature altogether for this course of life, the day of her birth being signalized by signs in the heavens which do show in all cases an hot and fiery complexion. Her husband was ware of it, and bore long with her,—until he learned how that she was secretly married to Caius Silius, one of the handsome gallants of Rome. So seeing the matter was as good as a plot upon his life, he had her put to death on this count, though in no wise for her lechery; for this he was well accustomed to see and know, and to condone the same.

Anyone who hath seen the statue of the aforesaid Messalina found in these last days at the town of Bordeaux will readily allow she did indeed bear the true look that comported with such a life. 'Tis an antique medal, found among some ruins; and is very fine and well worthy

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to be preserved to look at and carefully examine. She is a very fine woman, of a very fine, tall figure, with handsome features, and hair gracefully dressed in the old Roman fashion, and of very great stature,—all manifesting she was what History doth declare her to have been. For, by what I gather from sundry philosophers, physicians and physiognomists, big women be naturally inclined and well disposed to this thing. In truth such women are of a manly build, and so being, have share in the hot passions both of men and women, and conjoining the natures of both in one bodily frame, are thus more passionate and do possess more vigour than one alone,—even as, they say, a great and deep-laden ship doth need deep water to bear her up. Moreover, by what the learned Doctors that be expert in the mysteries of love declare, a big woman is more apt and more delightful thereto than a small one.

The which doth mind me of a very great Prince, whom I once knew. Wishing to commend a certain woman whose favours he had enjoyed, he said in this wise: “’Tis a most excellent harlot, as big as my lady mother.” Whereon being checked at the over-reckless vivacity of his speech, he did explain how that he meant not to say she was as great a harlot as his mother, but that she was of the like stature and as tall as was his mother. For sometimes a man doth say things he intendeth in no wise to say, as sometimes on the other hand he will say, without intending, the very actual truth.

Thus we see there is better cheer with big, tall women than with little ones, were it only for the noble grace and majesty, which they do own. For in this matter are these qualities as much called for and as attractive

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as in other exploits and exercises,—neither more nor less for example than in horsemanship. Wherein the riding of a tall and noble charger of blood is an hundred fold more agreeable and pleasant than is that of a little pony, and doth give more enjoyment by far to the cavalier. Albeit must the same be a good rider, and carry himself well, and show much more strength and address. In similar wise must a man carry himself toward fine, tall women; for that such as be of this stature are wont to have a higher-stepping gait than others, and will full often make riders slip their stirrup, nay! even lose their saddle altogether, as I have heard some tell which have essayed to mount them. In which case do they straight make boast and great mockery, whenas they have unseated them and thrown them flat. So have I been told of a certain lady of the good town of Paris, the which, the first time her lover did stay with her, said to him frankly: “Embrace me with a will, and clip me tight to you as well as ever you can; and ride boldly, for I am high-paced, —so beware of a fall. So for your part spare me not; I am strong enough and expert enough to bear your assaults, be they as fierce as they may. For indeed, if you spare me, will I not spare you. A good ball deserveth a good return.” But insooth the lady did win the match.

Thus must a man take good heed to his behaviour with suchlike bold, merry, stalwart, fleshly and well-built dames; and though truly the superabundant heat that is in them doth give great contentment, yet will they at times be overpressing by reason of their excessive passionateness. However, as the proverb saith: *There be good hinds of all sizes*, so likewise are there little, dwarf-

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ish women which have action, grace and manner in these matters coming very nigh to their taller sisters,—or mayhap they be fain to copy them,—and as keen for the fray as they, or even more so, (I would appeal to the masters in these arts), just as a little horse will curvet every whit as nimbly as a big one. This bringeth to mind the saying of a worthy husband, who declared his wife was like divers animals and above all like an ape, for that when a-bed she would do naught but twist and turn and toss about.

Sundry reminiscences have beguiled me into this digression. 'Tis time now to come back again to our original discussion.

Another case. That cruel tyrant Nero<sup>6</sup> did content himself with the mere putting away of his wife Octavia, daughter of Claudius and Messalina, for her adultery; and his cruelty stopped thereat.

Domitian<sup>6</sup> did even better, who divorced his wife Longina, because she was so fondly enamoured of a certain comedian and buffoon named Paris, and did naught else all day long but play the wanton with him, neglecting the society of her husband altogether. Yet, after no long time, did he take her back again and repented him of the separation from her. Remember this: the said mountebank had taught her meantime sundry tricks of adroitness and cunning address, the which the Emperor did hope he would have good profit of!

Pertinax<sup>7</sup> did show a like clemency toward his wife Favia Sulpitiana. Not indeed that he did divorce her, nor yet take her again, but though well knowing her to be devoted to a singer and player of instruments of music, and to give all her love to the same, yet made he no



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complaint, but let her do her will. Meanwhile himself pursued an intrigue with one Cornificia, who was his own cousin german. Herein he did but follow the opinion of Heliogabalus, who was used to say there was naught in the world more excellent than the frequenting of one's own relations, male and female. Many there be that I wot of, which have made such exchanges and had such-like dealings, going upon the opinions of these two Princes!

So likewise did the Emperor Severus<sup>a</sup> take no heed of his wife's honour or dishonour, though she was a public harlot. Yet did he never think of correcting her therefor, saying only she was called Julia by her name, and that all who bare that name had from all time been fated to be mighty whores and to cuckold their husbands. In like wise do I know many ladies bearing certain names under this our Christian dispensation,—I will not say who they be for the respect I owe to our holy Religion,—the which are constantly used to be strumpets and to *lift the leg* more than other women bearing other names. Of such have been very few which have escaped this evil fate.

Well! of a truth I should never have done, were I to adduce all the infinity of examples of great ladies and Roman Emperors of yore, in whose case their husbands, though sore cajoled and albeit very cruel men, did yet refrain them from exerting their cruelty and undoubted rights and privileges against their wives, no matter how dissolute and ill-conducted these were. I ween few prudes were there in those old days, as indeed is sufficiently declared in the history of their lives, and as may be plainly discerned by careful examination of ancient portraits and medallions representing them; for indeed you may behold

in their fair faces this same lubricity manifestly and obviously displayed by chisel and graver. Yet did their husbands, cruel Princes as these were, pardon them, and did put none of them to death, or but a very few. So would it seem true that these Pagans, not knowing God, yet were so gentle and clement toward their wives and the human race, while the most part of our Kings, Princes, great Lords and other Christian men, be so cruel toward the same for a like offence.

4.



**N**ATHELESS must we herein greatly commend our brave and good Philip Augustus,<sup>1</sup> King of France, who after having put away his wife Angerberge, sister of Canute, King of Denmark, which was his second wife, under pretext she was his cousin in the third degree on the side of his first wife Yaabel, though others say he did suspect her of unfaithfulness, yet did the said King, under the weight of ecclesiastical censures, albeit he had married again elsewhere, take her back again, and so conveyed her home behind him on horseback, without the privity of the Diet of Soissons, that had been summoned to decide this very matter, but was too dilatory to come to any conclusion thereon.

Nowadays never a one of our great men will do the like; but the least punishment they do their wives is to shut them up in perpetual prison, on bread and water, poisoning them or killing them, whether by their own hand or by legal process. If they have so great a desire to be rid of them and marry others, as doth often happen,

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why do they not divorce them and honourably separate from them, without doing other hurt, and then ask power of the Pope to marry another wife? For surely what God hath joined together, man (without God's authority) may in no wise separate. Yet have we had sundry examples thereof, and notably those of our French Kings Charles VIII.<sup>2</sup> and Louis XII.<sup>3</sup> Whereanent I did once hear a great Theologian discourse, namely with regard to the late King Philip of Spain, who had married his niece, the mother of the present King, and this by dispensation. He said thus: "Either must we outright allow the Pope to be God's Vicegerent on earth, and so absolutely, or else not at all. If he is, as we Catholics are bound to believe, we must entirely confess his power as absolute and unbounded on earth, and without limit, and that he can tie and untie as good him seemeth. But if we do not hold him such, well, I am sorry for them that be in such error, but good Catholics have naught to do with them." Wherefore hath our Holy Father authority over dissolutions of marriage, and can allay many grave inconveniences which come therefrom to husband and wife, when they do ill agree together.

Certainly women are greatly blameworthy so to treat their husbands and violate their good faith, the which God hath so strongly charged them to observe. But yet on the other hand hath he straitly forbid murder, and it is highly detestable to Him, on whosoever part it be. Never yet hardly have I seen bloody folk and murderers, above all of their wives, but they have paid dear for it, and very few lovers of blood have ended well, whereas many women that have been sinners have won the pity of God and obtained mercy, as did the Magdalen.

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In very deed these poor women are creatures more nearly resembling the Divinity than we, because of their beauty. For what is beautiful is more near akin to God who is all beautiful, than the ugly, which belongeth to the Devil.

The good Alfonzo, King of Naples, was used to say how that beauty was a token of good and gentle manners, as the fair flower is token of a good and fair fruit. And insooth have I seen in my life many fair women who were altogether good; who though they did indeed indulge in love, did commit no evil, nor take heed for aught else but only this pleasure, and thereto applied all their care without a second thought.

Others again have I seen most ill-conditioned, harmful, dangerous, cruel and exceeding spiteful, naught hindering them from caring for love and evil-doing both together.

It may then well be asked,—why, being thus subject to the fickle and suspicious humour of their husbands, the which do deserve punishment ten times more in God's eyes, why they are so sorely punished? Indeed and indeed the complexion and humour of such folk is as grievous as is the sorry task of writing of them.

I speak next of yet another such, a Lord of Dalmatia, who having slain his wife's paramour, did compel her to bed habitually with his dead body, stinking carrion as it was. The end whereof was, the unhappy woman was choked with the evil stench she did endure for several days.

In the *Cent Nouvelles* of the Queen of Navarre will be found the most touching and saddest tale that can be read on this matter, the tale of that fair lady of Germany the which her husband was used to constrain to

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drink ever from the skull of her dead lover, whom he had slain. This piteous sight did the Seigneur Bernage, at that day ambassador in the said country for the French King Charles VIII., see and make report thereof.

The first time ever I was in Italy, I was told, when passing through Venice, what did purport to be a true story of a certain Albanian knight, the which having surprised his wife in adultery, did kill the lover. And for spite that his wife had not been content with him, for indeed he was a gallant knight, and well fitted for Love's battles, so much so that he could engage ten or twelve times over in one night, he did contrive a strange punishment, and so did seek out carefully in all quarters a dozen stout fellows of the right lecherous sort, who had the repute of being well and vigorously built and very adroit in action. These he took and hired, and engaged the same for money. Then he did lock them in his wife's chamber, who was a very fair woman, and gave her up to them, beseeching them one and all to do their duty thoroughly, with double pay if that they did acquit themselves really well. Thus did they all go at her, one after another, and did handle her in such wise that they did kill her,—to the great pleasure of her husband, who did cast it in her teeth, when she was nigh unto death, that having loved this pleasure so much, she could now have her fill thereof. Herein he but copied what Semiramis (or rather *Thomyris*) said, as she put Cyrus' head into a vessel full of blood. A terrible death truly!

The poor lady had not so died, if only she had been of the robust complexion of a girl that was in Caesar's camp in Gaul. Two legions did pass, 'tis said, over her

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body in brief space; yet at the end of all she did dance a fling, feeling no hurt thereof.

I have heard speak of a Frenchwoman, town-bred, a lady of birth and of handsome looks, who was violated in our civil wars, in a town taken by assault, by a multitude of men-at-arms. On escaping away from these, she did consult a worthy Father as to whether she had sinned greatly, first telling him her story. He said, no!—inasmuch as she had been had by force, and deflowered without her consent, but entirely misliking the thing. Whereon she did make answer: “Now God be praised, for that once in my life I have had my fill, without sinning or doing offence to God!”

A lady of good quality, having been in like wise violated at the time of the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew, and her husband being dead, she did ask of a man of knowledge and right feeling, whether she had offended God, and whether she would not be punished of His sternness, and if she had not sorely wronged the manes of her husband, who had but only quite late been slain. He answered her, that if, when she was at this work, she had taken pleasure therein, then had she surely sinned; but if she had felt but disgust at the thing, it was as if it had never been. A good and wise judgement!

I once knew well a lady who held quite other views, for she was used to say: Never did she feel so great a pleasure in these doings, as when she was half forced and all but violated as it were, and then was there much pleasure therein. The more a woman showeth herself rebellious and recalcitrant, so much the more doth the man wax ardent and push home the attack; and so having once

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forced the breach, he doth use his victory more fiercely and savagely, and thereby giveth more appetite to the woman. The latter is for very delight like one half dead and swooned, or so it seemeth; but really 'tis by reason of the extreme pleasure she findeth therein. Indeed the same lady did actually say further, that oftentimes she would make these ados and show resistance to her husband, and play the prudish, capricious and scornful wife, and so put him the more on his mettle. Whereby when he did come to it, both he and she did find an hundred-fold more pleasure; for many writers have noted, a woman pleaseth better who makes some little difficulties and resistances than when she lets herself straightway be taken. So in War is a victory won by force more signalised and hailed with greater delight and enthusiasm than when had for nothing, and the triumph thereof is sweeter. Yet must not the lady in all this *overdo* the part of the peevish and evil-tempered jade, else may she likely be mistaken rather for a silly whore wishful to be playing of the prude. But at such interference would she be sore offended, to go by what I am told by such dames as are most versed and apt in these matters, to the whom I do appeal. For far be it from me to give them instruction in things they do understand much better than I!

Again, I have known many greatly blame some of these callous and murderous husbands on one count in especial, namely that, if their wives be whores, themselves are the cause of it. For, as Saint Augustine saith, it is great foolishness in an husband to demand chastity of his wife, himself being all the while plunged in the slough of lecherous living; for such mode of life as he doth claim from

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his wife, the same he should follow himself. Moreover we do read in Holy Scripture how that it is not expedient that the husband and wife love each other so excessively, meaning by this with a wanton and lecherous love. For in that case do they set all their heart and mind on lustful pleasures, and think so much of these and give themselves up so entirely to the same, as that they do neglect the love which they owe to God. Thus have I myself seen many women who so loved their husbands, and their husbands them, and burned for them with such ardour, as that both of them did forget God's service utterly, inas-much as the time they should have given thereto, they did devote to their lecheries and employ the whole of it therein.

Furthermore, and this is a yet worse thing, these same husbands do teach their wives a thousand lecheries. The end is that for one fire brand of lust they have in their body to begin with, they do engender an hundred, and so make them exceeding lascivious, so that being so trained and instructed, they cannot later refrain themselves from leaving their husbands to go after other swains. Whereat are their husbands in despair, and do punish their poor wives sorely. Herein they do commit great injustice, for it is only natural the wives, whenas they feel their heart stirred with satisfaction at being so well trained, should then wish to show others all they know; but the husbands would fain have them hide their science. In all this is neither sense nor reason, no more than if a good horseman should have a well-trained horse, which could go all paces, and yet should suffer no man to see the same tried or to mount on its back, but should



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require folk to believe it on his mere word, and take the beast without other warranty.

I have heard tell of an honourable gentleman of the great world, who having fallen deep in love with a certain fair lady, was warned by a friend of his how that he was but wasting his time, seeing she did love her husband far too well. So one day he did contrive to make an hole which looked right into their room. Then when they were together, he failed not to spy at them through this hole, whereby he did behold the greatest lubricities and lecheries, and this as much, nay! even more, on the part of the wife than of the husband. Accordingly the next day he hied him to his comrade, and detailing all the fine sight he had had, did thus say to him: "The woman is mine, I tell you, so soon as ever the husband hath started on such and such a journey; for she will never be able for long to restrain herself under the ardour which nature and art as well have given her, but must needs assuage the same. And in this wise by dint of my perseverance shall I have her."

I know yet another honourable gentleman, the which being exceedingly enamoured of a fair and honourable lady, aware she had a copy of Aretino with pictures in her closet, as her husband well knew and had seen and did allow, straightway augured therefrom that he would overcome her. And so without losing hope, did he make love to her so well, and so long and patiently, that at the last he did win the day. And hereon did he find that she had indeed learned good lessons and excellent science, whether from her husband or from others, albeit neither the one nor the other had been her first masters, but Dame Nature rather, who was a better mistress therein

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than all the arts. Not but what the book and good practice had helped much in the matter, as she did later confess to him.

We read in ancient Writers of a great courtesan and procuress of the days of old Rome, by name Elephantiné, <sup>4</sup> who did make and invent postures or *modes* of the same sort as those of Aretino, but even worse, the which the great ladies and princesses of yore, following the ways of harlotry, did study as being a very excellent book.

Also that good dame and famous whore of Cyrené in Africa, who did bear the title of *Dodecamechanos* (she of the twelve devices), because she had discovered twelve several modes whereby to make the pleasure more wanton and voluptuous.

Heliogabalus <sup>5</sup> was used to hire and keep in his pay, at the expense of much money and costly gifts, such men and women as did invent and bring forward new devices of this kind, the better to arouse his lecherousness. Yea! and I have heard of other such that are like him among the great folk of our own day!

But a few years since did Pope Sixtus V. cause to be hanged at Rome a Secretary which had been in the service of the Cardinal d'Este and was named Capella, for many and divers offences,—but amongst other that he had composed a book of these same fine postures, the which were figured by a great ecclesiastic whom I will not name for sake of his cloth, and by a great lady, one of the fair dames of Rome, the whole shown to the life and painted in proper form and colour.<sup>6</sup>

5.



ONCE knew a Prince and a great man who did even better, for he had of a goldsmith a very fair cup made of silver gilt, by way of a masterpiece and very especial curiosity, the most high-wrought, well engraven and cunningly chiseled piece of work could anywhere be seen. And thereon were cut most featly and subtly with the graver sundry of the *postures* from Aretino, of men and women with one another; this on the lower part of the cup, and above and higher up sundry also of the divers modes of beasts.

And 'twas here I first learned (for many is the time I have seen the said cup and drunk therein, not without laughing) the way of cohabitation of the lion and lioness, the which is quite opposite to that of all other animals. This I had never known before, and as to its nature I refer me to those who are ware of the facts without my telling them. The said cup was the glory of the Prince's sideboard; for verily, as I have said, it was right fairly and richly wrought, and very pleasant to look at inside and out.

When this same Prince did give a feast to the ladies, married and single, of his Court,—and not seldom was it his habit so to invite them,—his butlers never failed, such was his strait command, to serve the company to drink in this cup. Then were such as had never afore seen it moved in divers ways, either while drinking or afterward. Some would be sore astonished, and know not what to say thereat; some would be all ashamed and the scarlet leaping to their face; some again would be whispering low to one another: “Nay! what is all this carven inside? I fear

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me they be naughty pictures. I will never drink from the cup again. I must indeed be sore athirst before ever I ask for drink therefrom again?" Yet were they bound to drink from this cup, or burst with thirst; and to this end, would some shut their eyes in drinking, but the rest, who were less shamefaced, not. Such as had heard tell of the hang of it, as well matrons as maids, would be laughing the while under the rose; while such as had not, would be downright bursting with desire to do the like.

When asked what they had to laugh at and what they had seen, some would reply they had seen naught but some pictures, and for anything there was there they would make no ado about drinking another time. Others would say, "As for me, I think no ill thereof; what the eye sees or a picture shows forth doth never soil the soul." Some again would declare, "Bah! good wine is as good in this cup as in another;" and say it was as good to drink out of as any other, and did quench the thirst just the same. Then some of the ladies would be questioned, why they did not shut their eyes in drinking, to which they would make answer they were fain to see what they were drinking, for fear instead of wine it might be some drug or poison. Others would be asked which they did take the more pleasure in, seeing or drinking; whereto they would reply, "In both, of course." Some would be crying, "Oh! the quaint grotesques!" others, "Ah, ha! what be these merry mummeries we have here?" Some, "Oh! the pretty pictures!" and others, "Here be fine figures to look at!" Some, "Well, well! Master Goldsmith must needs have had good leisure to while away his time in making these gewgaws!" Others, "And you,

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Sire! to think you should have taken this wondrous cup of him!" "Now feel ye not a something that doth touch you, ladies, at the sight?" They would enquire presently, to which the answer would come, "Nay! never a one of all these droll images hath had power enough to stir me!" Others again would be asked, whether they had not found the wine hot, and whether it had not warmed them finely in this wintry weather; and they would answer, "Nay! we noted no heat; for indeed our draught was cold, and did much refresh us." Some they would ask, which of all these figures they would best love to have; and they would answer they could in no wise remove them from where they were to transport them thither.

In short, an hundred thousand gibes and quips and cranks would pass thereon between the gentlefolk and ladies at table, as I have myself seen, so that it did make right merry jesting, and a very pleasant thing to see and hear. But above all, to my thinking, best and most heartsome was it to watch those innocent maids, or mayhap them that figured only to be so, and other ladies newly come to Court, striving to maintain a cold mien, with an artificial laugh on their face and lips, or else holding themselves in and playing the hypocrite, as was the way with many ladies. And mind this, though they had been a-dying of thirst, yet durst not the butlers have given them to drink in any other cup or glass. Yea! and likewise were there some ladies that sware, to put a good face on the matter, they would never, never come to these feasts again; but for all that did they in no wise fail to come again often enough, for truly the Prince was a right magnificent and dainty host. Other ladies

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would say, on being invited thither: "Well! I will go, but under protest we shall not be given to drink in the cup;" yet when once they were there, would they drink therein as well as ever. At the last would they aye think better of it, and make no more scruple whatever about drinking. Nay! some did even better, and turned the said images to good use in fitting time and place; and yet more than this, some did act dissolutely of set purpose to make trial of the same, for that every person of spirit would fain essay everything. So here we have the fatal effects of this cup so well dight. And hereanent must each fancy for himself all the other discourse, and thoughts and looks and words, that these ladies did indulge in and give vent to, one with another, whether in privity or in open company.

I ween this cup was of a very different sort from the one whereof M. Ronsard <sup>1</sup> doth speak in one of his earliest Odes, dedicated to the late King Henri, which doth thus begin:

Comme un qui prend une couppe,  
Seul honneur de son trésor.  
Et de rang verse à la troupe  
Du vin qui rit dedans l'or.

(As one who takes a cup, sole honour of all his treasure, and duly pours therein to the company good wine that laughs within the gold.)

However in this cup I tell of the wine laughed not at any, but rather the folk at the wine. For verily some dames did drink laughing, and others trembling with delight; and yet others would be nigh *compissoyent*,—I mean not of course just ordinary piddling, but something

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more. In a word the said cup did bring dire effects with it, so touching true were these images, figures and representations.

In likewise do I remember me how once, in a gallery of the Comte de Chasteau-Villain, known as the Seigneur Adjacet, a company of ladies with their lovers having come to visit the said fair mansion, they did fall to contemplating sundry rare and beautiful pictures in the Gallery thereof. Among these they beheld a very beautiful picture, wherein were pourtrayed a number of fair ladies naked and at the bath, which did touch, and feel, and handle, and stroke, one the other, and intertwine and fondle with each other, and so enticingly and prettily and featly did show all their hidden beauties that the coldest recluse or hermit had been warmed and stirred thereat. Wherefore did a certain great lady, as I have heard it told, and indeed I do know her well, losing all restraint of herself before this picture, say to her lover, turning toward him maddened as it were at the madness of love she beheld painted; "Too long have we tarried here. Let us now straightway take coach and so to my lodging; for that no more can I hold in the ardour that is in me. Needs must away and quench it; too sore do I burn." And so she did haste away to enjoy her faithful lover.

Suchlike pictures and portrayals do bring more hurt to a weak soul than men think for. Another of the same sort there, was a Venus naked, lying on a couch and eyed by her son Cupid; another, Mars a-bed with Venus, another, a Leda with her swan. Many other there be, both there and elsewhere, that are somedel more modestly painted and better veiled than the figures of Aretino;

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but all do come pretty much to one and the same, and are of the like nature with our cup whereof I have been speaking. This last had, as it were, a sort of likeness in unlikeness to the cup which Renault de Montauban found in the Castle Ariosto doth tell of, the which did openly discover unhappy husbands that were cuckolds, whereas this one was more likely to make them so. But while the one did cause somewhat too great scandal to cuckolds and their faithless wives, the other had no such effect. Nowadays is no need of these books or these pictures, for that husbands teach their wives themselves enough and to spare without them. And now for the results of suchlike husbands' schooling!

I knew an excellent Venetian printer at Paris named Messer Bernardo, a kinsman of the great Aldus Manutius of Venice<sup>2</sup>, which did keep his shop in the Rue Saint-Jacques. The same did once tell me, and swear to it, that in less than a year he had sold more than fifty of the two volumes of Aretino<sup>3</sup> to very many folks, married and unmarried, as well as to women of whom he did name three very great ladies of society; but I will not repeat the names. To these he did deliver the book into their own hands, and right well bound, under oath given he would breathe never a word of it—though he did round it to me natheless. And he did tell me further how that another lady having asked him some time after, if he had not another like the one she had seen in the hands of one of the three, he had answered her: *Signora, si, e peggio* ("Yes, Madam,—and worse"); and she instantly, money on table, had bought them all at their weight in gold. Verily a frantic inquisitiveness for to send her



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husband a voyage to the haven of Cornette (the Horns), near by Civita-Vecchia.

All such devices and postures are abominable in God's sight, as indeed St. Jerome saith: "Whosoever doth show himself more unrestrainedly enamoured of his wife than a husband should, is an adulteror and committeth sin. And forasmuch as sundry Doctors of the Church have spoken thereof, I will sum up the matter shortly in Latin words, seeing themselves have not thought good to say it in plain language: *Excessus*, say they, *conjugum fit, quando uxor cognoscitur ante retro stando, sedendo, in latere, et mulier super virum* (Excess between married people is committed when the wife is known before by the husband standing behind, or sitting, or sideways, or the woman on top of the man). This last posture is referred to in a little couplet I once read, and which goes as follows:

In prato viridi monialem ludere vidi  
Cum monacho leviter, ille sub, illa super.

Other learned Doctors hold that any mode whatsoever is good, provided only that *semen ejaculetur in matricem mulieris, et quomodocunque uxor cognoscatur, si vir ejaculetur semen in matricem, non est peccatum mortale*.

These arguments are to be found in the *Summa Benedicti*. This Benedict<sup>4</sup> is a Doctor of the Cordeliers, who has writ most excellently of all the sins, and shown how that he hath both seen much and read widely. Anyone who will read this passage, will find therein a number of excesses which husbands do commit toward their wives. Thus he saith that *quando mulier est ita pinguis ut non possit aliter coire, non est mortale peccatum, modo vir*

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*ejaculetur semen in vas naturale.* Whereas others again say it were better husbands should abstain from their wives altogether when they are with child, as do the animals, than for them to befoul marriage with such abominations.

I knew once a famous courtesan of Rome, called "The Greek," whom a great Lord of France had kept in that city. After some space, she had a strong desire to visit France, using to this end the Signor Bonvisi, a Banker of Lyons, a native of Lucca and a very rich man, who was her lover. Wherein having succeeded, she did make many enquiries concerning the said gentleman and his wife, and amongst other matters, whether mayhap she did not cuckold him, "seeing that," she would say, "I have so well trained her husband, and have taught him such excellent lessons, that he having once shown them to his wife and practised the same with her, it is not possible but that she have desired to show the same to others also. For insooth our trade is such an one, when it is well learned, that a woman doth find an hundred times more pleasure in showing and practising it with several than with one only." Furthermore did she say that the said lady ought of rights to make her a handsome present and one worthy of her pains and good teaching, forasmuch as when her husband did first come to her school, he knew naught at all, but was in these matters the most silly, inexperienced prentice hand ever she had seen. But now, so well had she trained him and fashioned him that his wife must needs find him an hundred times better. For in fact the lady, desiring to see her, went to visit her in disguise; this the courtesan suspected, and held all the discourse to her I have detailed,—and worse still and more dissolute, for she was an exceeding dissolute

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woman. And this is how husbands do forge the knives to cut their own throats withal; or rather is it a question not of throats at all, but of horns! Acting after this sort do they pollute holy matrimony, for the which God doth presently punish them; then must they have their revenge on their wives, wherein are they an hundred times more deserving of punishment than before. So am I not a whit surprised that the same venerable Doctor did declare marriage to be in very truth but a kind of adultery, as it were; thereby intending, when men did abuse it after the fashion I have been discoursing of.

Thus hath marriage been forbidden our priests; for that it is no wise meet that, just come from their wives' bed and after polluting themselves exceedingly with them, they should then approach an holy altar. For, by my faith, so far as I have heard tell, some folk do wanton more with their wives than do the very reprobates with the harlots in brothels; for these last, fearing to catch some ill, do not go to extremes or warm to the work with them as do husbands with their wives. For these be clean and can give no hurt,—that is to say the most part of them, though truly not quite all; for myself have known some to give it to their husbands, as also their husbands to them.

Husbands, so abusing their wives, are much deserving of punishment, as I have heard great and learned Doctors say; for that they do not behave themselves modestly with their wives in their bed, as of right they should, but wanton with them as with concubines, whereas marriage was instituted for necessity of procreation, and in no wise for dissolute and lecherous pleasure. And this did the Emperor Sejanus Commodus, otherwise called Anchus

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Venus<sup>6</sup>, well declare unto us, when he said to his wife Calvilla, who did make complaint to him, for that he was used to bestow on harlots and courtesans and other the like what did of rights belong to her in her bed, and rob her of her little enjoyments and gratifications. "Bear with me, wife," he said to her, "that with other women I satiate my foul passions, seeing that the name of wife and consort is one deserving of dignity and honour, and not one for mere pleasure and lecherousness." I have never yet read or learned what reply his good wife the Empress made him thereto; but little doubt can be she was ill content with his golden saying, and did answer him from out her heart, and in the words of the most part, nay! of all, married women: "A fig for your dignity and honour; pleasure for me! We thrive better on this last than on all the other."

Nor yet must we suppose for an instant that the more part of married men of to-day or of any other day, which have fair wives, do speak after this wise. For indeed they do not marry and enter into wedlock, nor take their wives, but only in order to pass their time pleasantly and indulge their passion in all fashions and teach the same merry precepts, as well for the wanton movements of their body as for the dissolute and lascivious words of their mouth, to the end their love may be the better awaked and stirred up thereby. Then, after having thus well instructed and debauched their minds, if they do go astray elsewhere, lo! they are for sorely punishing them, beating and murdering and putting of them to death.

Truly scant reasonableness is there in this, just as if a man should have debauched a poor girl, taking her

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straight from her mother's arms, and have robbed her of her honour and maidenhood, and should then, after having his will of her, beat her and constrain her to live quite otherwise, in entire chastity,—verily an excellent and opportune thing to ask! Who is there would not condemn such an one, as a man unreasonable and deserving to be made suffer? The same might justly be said of many husbands, the which, when all is said and done, do more debauch their wives and teach them more precepts to lead them into lechery than ever their gallants use, for they do enjoy more time and leisure therefor than lovers can have. But presently, when they cease their instructions, the wives most naturally do seek a change of hand and master, being herein like a good rider, who findeth more pleasure an hundredfold in mounting an horse than one that is all ignorant of the art. “And alack!” so used the courtesan we but now spake of to say, “there is no trade in all the world that is more cunning, nor that doth more call for constant practice, than that of Venus.” Wherefore these husbands should be warned not to give suchlike instructions to their wives, for that they be far and away too dangerous and harmful to the same. Or, if they needs must, and afterward find their wives playing them a knavish trick, let them not punish them, forasmuch as it is themselves have opened the door thereto.

Here am I constrained to make a digression to tell of a certain married woman, fair and honourable and of good station, whom I know, the which did give herself to an honourable gentleman,—and that more for the jealousy she bare toward an honourable lady whom this same gentleman did love and keep as his paramour than for

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love. Wherefore, even as he was enjoying her favour, the lady said to him: "Now at last, to my great contentment, do I triumph over you and over the love you bear to such an one." The gentleman made answer to her: "A person that is beat down, brought under and trampled on, can scarce be said to triumph greatly." The lady taketh umbrage at this reply, as touching her honour, and straightway makes answer, "You are very right," and instantly puts herself of a sudden to unseat the man, and slip away from him. Never of yore was Roman knight or warrior so quick and dexterous to mount and remount his horses at the gallop as was the lady this bout with her gallant. Then doth she handle him in this mode, saying the while, "Well then, at present I can declare truly and in good conscience I triumph over you, forasmuch as I hold you subdued under me." Verily a dame of a gay and wanton ambition, and very strange the way in which she did satisfy the same!

I have heard speak of a very fair and honourable lady of the great world, much given over to love, who yet was so arrogant and proud, and so high of heart, that when it came to it, never would she suffer her man to put her under him and humble her. For by so doing she deemed she wrought a great wrong to the nobility of her spirit, and held it a great piece of cowardice to be thus humbled and subdued, as in a triumphant conquest and enslavement; but was fain ever to guard the upper hand and pre-eminence. And one thing that did greatly help her herein was that she would never have dealings with one greater in rank than herself, for fear that, using his authority and puissance, he might succeed in giving the law to her, and so turn, twist about and

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trample her, just as he pleased. Rather for this work would she choose her equals and inferiors, to the which she could dictate their place and station, their order and procedure in the amorous combat, neither more nor less than doth a sergeant major to his men-at-arms on the day of battle. These orders would she in no wise have them overpass, under pain of losing what they most desire and value, in some cases her love, in others their own life. In such wise that never, standing or sitting or lying, could they prevail to return back and put upon her the smallest humiliation, submission or subservience, which she had done them. Hereanent I refer me to the words and judgement of such, men and women, as have dealt with such loves, stations and modes.

Anyway the lady we speak of could so order it, that no hurt should be done to the dignity she did affect, and no offence to her proud heart; for by what I have heard from sundry that have been familiar with her, she had powers enough to make such ordinances and regulations.

In good sooth a formidable and diverting woman's caprice, and a right curious scruple of a proud spirit. Yet was she in the right after all; for in truth is it a humiliating and painful thing to be so brought under and bent to another's will, and trod down, when one thinks of it quickly and alone, and saith to oneself, "Such an one hath put me under him and trod me underfoot,"—for underfoot it is, if not literally, at any rate in a manner of speaking, and doth amount to the same thing.

The same lady moreover would never suffer her inferiors to kiss her on the mouth, "seeing it is so," she would say, "that the touch and contact of mouth to mouth is the most delicate and precious of all contacts, whether

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of the hand or other members." For this reason would she not be so approached, nor feel on her own a foul, unclean mouth, and one not meet for hers.

Now hereanent is yet another question I have known some debate: what advantage and overplus of glory hath the one, whether man or woman, over his companion, whenas they are at these amorous skirmishes and conquests?

The man on his side doth set forth the reasons given above, to wit, that the victory is much greater when as one holdeth his sweet enemy laid low beneath him, and doth subjugate, put underfoot and tame her at his ease and how he best pleaseth. For there is no Princess or great lady so high, but doth, when she is in that case, even though it were with an inferior or subordinate, suffer the law and domination which Venus hath ordained in her statutes; and for this cause glory and honour do redound therefrom to the man in very high measure.

The woman on the other hand saith: "Yes! I do confess you may well feel triumphant when you do hold me under you and put me underfoot. But if it be only a question of keeping the upper station, I likewise do sometimes take that in mere sportiveness and of a pretty caprice that assaileth me, and not of any constraint. Further, when this upperhand position doth not like me, I do make you work for me like a very serf or galley-slave, or to put it better, make you pull at the collar like a veritable wagon-horse, and there you are toiling, striving, sweating, panting, straining to perform the task and labour I choose to exact from you. Meanwhile, for me, lo! I am at my ease, and watch your efforts. Sometimes do I make merry at your expense, and take my pleasure in seeing



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you in such sore labour, sometimes too I compassionate you, just as pleaseth me and according as I am inclined to merriment or pity. Then after having well fulfilled my pleasure and caprice herein, I do leave my gallant there, tired, worn out, weakened and enervate, so he can do no more, and hath need of naught so much as of a good sleep and a good meal, a strong broth, a restorative, or some good soup to hearten him up. For me, for all such labours and efforts, I feel no whit the worse, but only that I have been right well served at your expense, sir gallant, and do experience no hurt; but only wish for some other to give me as much again, and to make him as much exhausted as you. And after this wise, never surrendering, but making my sweet foe surrender to me, 'tis I bear away the true victory and true glory, seeing that in a duello he that doth give in is dishonoured, and not he that doth fight on to the last dire extremity."

So have I heard this tale following told of a fair and honourable lady. One time, her husband having wakened her from a sound sleep and good rest she was enjoying, for to do the thing, when he was done, she said to him, "Well! 'tis you did it, not I." And she did clip him exceeding tight with arms, hands, feet and legs crossed over each other, saying, "I will teach you to wake me up another time," and so with might and main and right good will, pulling, pushing and shaking her husband, and who could in no wise get loose, but who lay there sweating and stewing and aweary, and was fain to cry her mercy, she did make him so exhausted, and so foredone and feeble, that he grew altogether out of breath and did swear her a sound oath how another time he would have her only at his own time, humour and desire. The tale is

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one better to imagine and picture to oneself than to describe in words.

Such then are the woman's arguments, with sundry other she might very well have adduced to boot. And note how the humblest strumpet can do as much to a great King or Prince, if he have gone with her,—and this is a great scorn, seeing that the blood royal is held to be the most precious can ever be. At any rate is it right carefully guarded and very expensively and preciously accommodated far more than any other man's!

This then is what the women do or say. Yet truly is it great pity a blood so precious should be polluted and contaminated so foully and unworthily. And indeed it was forbid by the law of Moses to waste the same in any wise on the ground; but it is much worse done to intermingle it in a most foul and unworthy fashion. Still 'twere too much to have them do as did a certain great Lord, of whom I have heard tell, who having in his dreams at night polluted himself among his sheets, had these buried, so scrupulous-minded was he, saying it was a babe issuing therefrom that was dead, and how that it was pity and a very great loss that this blood had not been put into his wife's womb, for then it might well be the child would have lived.

Herein might he very like have been deceived, seeing that of a thousand cohabitations the husband hath with the wife in the year, 'tis very possible, as I have above said, she will not become pregnant thereby, not once in all her life, in fact never in the case of some women which be eunuch and barren, and can never conceive. Whence hath come the error of certain misbelievers, which say that marriage was not ordained so much for the procrea-

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tion of children as for pleasure. Now this is ill thought and ill said, for albeit a woman doth not grow pregnant every time a man have her, 'tis so for some purpose of God to us mysterious, and that he wills to punish in this wise both man and wife, seeing how the greatest blessing God can give us in marriage is a good offspring, and that not in mere concubinage. And many women there be that take a great delight in having it, but others not. These latter will in no wise suffer aught to enter into them, as well to avoid foisting on their husbands children that are not theirs, as to avoid the semblance of doing them wrong and making them cuckolds.

For by this name of cuckoos (or cuckolds), properly appertaining to those birds of Springtide that are so called because they do lay their eggs in other birds' nests, are men also known by antinomy,<sup>6</sup> when others come to lay eggs in their nest, that is in their wives' article,—which is the same thing as saying, cast their seed into them and make them children.

And this is how many wives think they are doing no wrong to their husbands in taking their fill of pleasure, provided only they do not become pregnant. Such their fine scruples of conscience! So a great lady of whom I have heard speak, was used to say to her gallant: "Take your pastime as much as ever you will, and give me pleasure; but on your life, take heed to let naught bedew me, else is it a question of life and death for you."

A like story have I heard told by the Chevalier de Sanzay of Brittany, a very honourable and gallant gentleman, who, had not death overtaken him at an early age, would have been a great seaman, having made a very good beginning of his career. And indeed he did bear the

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marks and signs thereof, for he had had an arm carried off by a cannon shot at a sea-fight he did engage in. As his ill luck would have it, he was taken prisoner of the Corsairs and carried off to Algiers. His master who had him as his slave, was the head Priest of the Mosque in that part, and had a very beauteous wife. This lady did fall so deep in love with the said Sanzay that she bade him come to have amorous dalliance and delight with her, saying how she would treat him very well, better than any of her other slaves. But above all else did she charge him very straitly, and on his life, or on pain of most rigorous imprisonment, not to emit in her body a single drop of his seed, forasmuch as, so she declared, she must in no wise be polluted and contaminated with Christian blood, whereby she thought she would sorely offend against the law of her people and their great Prophet Mahomet. And further she bade him, that albeit she should even order him an hundred times over to do the whole thing outright, he should do nothing of the sort, for that it would be but the exceeding pleasure wherewith she was enraptured that made her say so to him, and in no wise the will of her heart and soul.

The aforesaid Sanzay, in order to get good treatment and greater liberty, Christian as he was, did shut his eyes this once to his law. For a poor slave, hardly entreated and cruelly chained, may well forget his principles now and again. So he did obey the lady, and was so prudent and so submissive to her order, as that he did minister right well to her pleasure. Wherefore the lady did love him the better, because he was so submissive to her strait and difficult command. Even when she would cry to him: "Let go, I say; I give you full permission!" yet

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would he never once do so, for he was sore afraid of being beaten as the Turks use (bastinadoed), as he did often see his comrades beaten before his eyes.

Verily a strange and sore caprice; and herein it would seem she did well prevail, both for her own soul's sake which was Turk and for the other who was Christian. But he swore to me how that never in all his life had he been in so sore a strait!

He did tell me yet another tale, the most heartsome and amusing possible, of a trick she once put upon him. But forasmuch as it is not pleasant, I will repeat it not, for dread of doing offence to modest ears.

Later was the same Sanzay ransomed by his friends, the which are folk of honour and good estate in Brittany, and related to many great persons, as to the Connétable de Sanzay, who was greatly attached to his elder brother, and did help him much toward his deliverance. Having won this, the Chevalier did come to Court, and held much discourse to M. d'Estrozze and to me of his adventures and of divers matters, and amongst other such he told us these stories.

### 6.



**W**HAT are we to say now of some husbands which be not content only to procure themselves entertainment and wanton pleasure with their wives, but do give the desire therefor to others also, their companions, friends and the like? For so have I known several which do praise their wives to these, detail to them their beauties, picture to them their members and various bodily parts, recount the pleasure that they have with them, and the caresses

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their wives do use towards them, make them kiss, touch and try them, and even behold them naked.

What do such deserve? Why! that they be cuckolded right off, as did Gyges, by the means of his ring, to Candaules,<sup>1</sup> King of the Lydians. For the latter, fool that he was, having bepraised to Gyges the rare beauty of his wife, and at the last having shown her to him stark naked, he fell so madly in love with her that he did what seemed him good and brought Candaules to his death and made himself master of his Kingdom. 'Tis said the wife was in such despite and despair at having been so shown by her husband to another man, that she did herself constrain Gyges to play this traitorous part, saying thus to him: "Either must he that hath constrained and counselled you to such a thing die by your hand, or else you, who have looked on me in my nakedness, must die by the hand of another." Of a surety was the said King very ill advised so to rouse desire for a fresh dainty, so good and sweet, which it rather behoved him to hold very specially dear and precious.

Louis, Duke or Orleans,<sup>2</sup> killed at the Barbette Gate of Paris, did the exact opposite. An arrant debaucher was he of the ladies of the Court, and that even of the greatest among them all. For, having once a very fair and noble lady to bed with him, so soon as her husband came into his bedchamber to wish him good-morrow, he did promptly cover up the lady's head, the other's wife's that is, with the sheet, but did uncover all the rest of her body, letting him see her all naked and touch her at his pleasure, only with express prohibition on his life not to take away the linen from off the face, nor to uncover it in any wise,—a charge he durst not contravene. Then did the Duke ask

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him several times over what he thought of this fair, naked body, whereat the other was all astonished and exceeding content. At the last he did get his leave to quit the chamber, and this he did without having ever had the chance to recognize the woman for his own wife.

If only he had carefully looked over her body and examined the same, as several that I have known, he would mayhap have recognized her by sundry blemishes. Thus is it a good thing for men to go over sometimes and observe their wives' bodies.

She, after her husband was well gone, was questioned of M. d'Orléans, if she had felt any alarm or fear. I leave you to imagine what she said thereto, and all the trouble and anguish she was in by the space of a quarter of an hour, seeing all that lacked for her undoing was some little indiscretion, or the smallest disobedience her husband might have committed in lifting the sheet. 'Twas doubtless M. d'Orléans' orders, but still he would surely, on his making discovery, have straightway slain him to stay him of the vengeance he would have wrought on his wife.

And the best of it was that, being the next night to bed with his wife, he did tell her how M. d'Orléans had let him see the fairest naked woman he had ever beheld, but as to her face, that he could give no news thereof, seeing the sight of it had been forbid him. I leave you to imagine what the lady must have thought within her heart. Now of this same lady and M. d'Orléans 'tis said did spring that brave and valiant soldier, the Bastard of Orleans, the mainstay of France and scourge of England, from whom is descended the noble and generous race of the Comtes de Dunois.

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However to return to our tales of husband too ready to give others sight of their wives naked, I know one who, on a morning, a comrade of his having gone to see him in his chamber as he was dressing, did show him his wife quite naked, lying all her length fast asleep, having herself thrown her bed-clothes off her, it being very hot weather. So he did draw aside the curtain half way, in such wise that the rising sun shining upon her, he had leisure to contemplate well and thoroughly at his ease, which doing he beheld naught but what was right fair and perfect. On all this beauty then he did feast his eyes, not indeed as long as he would, but as long as he could; and after, the husband and he went forth to the Palace.

The next day, the gentleman who was an ardent lover of this same honourable lady, did report to her the sight he had seen, and even described many things he had noted. He said further it was the husband which did urge him thereto, and he and no other had drawn the curtain for him to see. The lady, out of the despite she then conceived against her husband, did let herself go, and so gave herself to his friend on this only account,—a thing which all his service and devotion had not before been able to win.

I knew once a very great Lord, who, one morning, wishing to go an-hunting, and his gentlemen having come to find him at his rising, even as they were booting him, and he had his wife lying by him and holding him right close to her, he did so suddenly lift the coverlet she had no time to move away from where she rested, in such wise that they all saw her as much as they pleased even to the half of her body. Then with a loud laugh did the Lord cry to these gentlemen there present: "Well, well! sirs, have



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not I let you see enough and to spare of my good wife?" But so vexed and chagrined was she at it all that she did conceive a great grudge against him therefor, and above all for the way she had been surprised. And it may well be, she did pay it back to him with interest later on.

I know yet another of these great Lords, who learning that a friend and kinsman of his was in love with his wife, whether to make him the more envious or to make him taste all the despite and despair he might conceive at the thought of the other possessing so fair a woman, and he having never so much as a chance of touching her, did show her him one morning, when he had come to see him, the pair being a-bed together. Yea! he did even worse, for he did set about to embrace her before his eyes, as though she had been altogether in a privy place. Further he kept begging of his friend to see, saying he was doing it all to gratify him. I leave you to imagine whether the lady did not find in such conduct of her husband excuse to do likewise in all ways with the friend, and of good conscience, and whether he was not right well punished by being made to bear the horns.

I have heard speak of yet another, likewise a great Lord, who did the same with his wife before a great Prince, his master, but, 'twas by his prayer and commandment, for he was one that took delight in this form of gratification. Now are not such like persons blameworthy, for that after being pandars to their own wives, they will after be their executioners too?

It is never expedient for a man to expose his wife, any more than his lands, countries or places. And I may cite an example hereof which I did learn from a great Captain. It concerns the late M. de Savoye, who did dissuade

the late King of France,\* when on his return from Poland he was passing through Lombardy, and counselled him not to go to Milan or enter therein, alleging that the King of Spain might take umbrage thereat. But this was not the real cause at all; rather was he afraid lest the King being once there and visiting all quarters of the city, and beholding its beauty and riches and grandeur, might be assailed by an overwhelming desire to have it again and reconquer it by fair and honest right, as had done his predecessors. Now this was the true reason, as a great Prince said who knew the fact from our late King, who for his part quite well understood what the restriction meant. However, to be complaisant to M. de Savoye, and to cause no offence on the part of the King of Spain, he took his march so as to pass by the city, albeit he had all the wish in the world to go thither, by what he did me the honour to tell me after his return to Lyons. In this transaction we cannot but deem M. de Savoye to have been more of a Spaniard than a Frenchman.

I deem those husbands likewise very much to blame who after having received their life by favour of their wives, are so little grateful therefor, as that for any suspicion they have of their intriguing with other men, do treat them exceeding harshly, to the extent of making attempt upon their lives. I have heard speak of a Lord against whose life sundry conspirators having conspired and plotted, his wife by dint of her prayers did turn them from their purpose, and saved her husband from being assassinated. But nevertheless later on was she very ill rewarded by him and entreated most cruelly.

I have seen likewise a gentleman who, having been accused and brought to trial for very bad performance of

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his duty in succouring his General in a battle, so much so that he had left him to be killed without any help or succour at all, was nigh to be sentenced and condemned to have his head cut off, and this notwithstanding 20,000 crowns the which he did give to save his life. Thereupon his wife spake to a great Lord holding high place in the world, and lay with him by permission and at the supplication of the said husband; and so what money had not been able to do, this did her beauty and fair body effect, and she did save him his life and liberty. Yet after he did treat her so ill as that nothing could be worse. Of a surety husbands of the sort, so cruel and savage, are very pitiful creatures.

Others again have I known who did quite otherwise, for that they have known how to show gratitude to those that helped them, and have all their life long honoured the good dame that had saved them from death.

There is yet another sort of cuckolds, those who are not content to have been suspicious and difficult all their life, but when going to leave this world and on the point of death, are so still. Of this sort knew I one who had a very fair and honourable lady to wife, but yet had not always given her all to him alone. When now he was like to die, he said to her repeatedly: "Ah! wife mine, I am going to die! And would to God you could have kept me company, and you and I could have gone together into the other world! My death had not then been so hateful to me, and I should have taken it in better part." But the lady, who was still very fair and not more than thirty-seven years old, was by no means fain to follow him, nor agree with him in this. Nor yet was she willing to play the madwoman for his sake, as we read did Evadné, daughter of

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Mars and Thebé and wife of Capaneus,<sup>4</sup> the which did love her husband so ardently that, he having died, so soon as ever his body was cast on the fire, she threw herself thereon all alive as she was, and was burned and consumed along with him, in her great constancy and strength of purpose, and so did accompany him in his death.

Alcestis<sup>5</sup> did far better yet, for having learned by an oracle that her husband Admetus, King of Thessaly, was to die presently, unless his life were redeemed by the death of some other of his friends, she did straightway devote herself to a sudden death, and so saved her husband alive.

Nowadays are no women of this kindly sort left, who are fain to go of their own pleasure into the grave before their husbands, and not survive them. No! such are no more to be found; the dams that bare them are dead, as say the horse-dealers of Paris of horses, when no more good ones are to be got.

And this is why I did account the husband, whose case I but now adduced, ill-advised to make such proposals to his wife and odious so to invite her to death, as though it had been some merry feast to invite her to. It was an ar-rant piece of jealousy that did make him so speak, and the despite he did feel within himself, he would presently experience yonder in the lower world, when he should see his wife, whom he had so excellently trained, in the arms of some lover of hers or some new husband.

What a strange sort of jealousy was this her husband must have been seized with for the nonce, and strange how he would keep telling her again and again how if he should recover, he would no more suffer at her hands what he had suffered aforetime! Yet, so long as he was alive and

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well, he had never been attacked by the like feelings, but ever let her do at her own good pleasure.

The gallant Tancred<sup>e</sup> did quite otherwise, the same who in old days did so signalise his valour in the Holy War. Being at the point of death, and his wife beside him making moan, together with the Count of Tripoly, he did beg the twain when that he was dead, to wed one another, and charged his wife to obey him therein,—the which they afterward did.

Mayhap he had observed some loving dalliance betwixt them during his lifetime. For she may well have been as very a harlot as her mother, the Countess of Anjou, who after the Comte de Bretagne had had her long while, went unto Philip,<sup>7</sup> the King of France, who did treat her the same fashion, and had of her a bastard daughter called Cicile, whom after he did give in marriage to this same valorous Tancred, who by reason of his noble exploits did of a surety little deserve to be cuckold.

An Albanian, having been condemned in Southern lands to be hung for some offence, being in the service of the King of France, when he was to be led out to his punishment, did ask to see his wife, who was a very fair and lovable woman, and bid her farewell. Then while he was saying his farewell and in the act of kissing her, lo! he did bite her nose right off and tear it clean out of her pretty face. And the officers thereupon questioning him why he had done this horrible thing to his wife, he replied he had done it out of sheer jealousy, “seeing she is very fair, for the which after my death I wot well she will straightway be sought after and given up to some other of my comrades, for I know her to be exceeding lecherous and one to forget me without more ado. I am fain there-

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fore she bear me in memory after my death, and weep and be sorry. If she is not so for my death's sake, at least will she be sore grieved at being disfigured, and none of my comrades will have the pleasure of her I have had." Verily an appalling instance of a jealous husband!

I have heard speak of others who, feeling themselves old, failing, wounded, worn out and near to death, have out of sheer despite and jealousy privily cut short their mates' days, even when they have been fair and beauteous women.

Now as to such strange humours on the part of these cruel and tyrannic husbands which do thus put their wives to death, I have heard the question disputed,—to wit, whether it is permitted women, when they do perceive or suspect the cruelty and murder their husbands are fain to practise against them, to gain the first hand and anticipate their aggressors and so save their own lives, making the others play the part first and sending these on in front to make ready house and home in the other world.

I have heard it maintained the answer should be yes,—that they may do so, not certainly according to God's law, for thereby is all murder forbid, as I have said, but by the world's way of thinking, well enough. This opinion men base on the saying,—better 'tis to be beforehand than behind. For no doubt everyone is bound to take heed for his own life; and seeing God hath given it us, we must guard it well till he shall call us away at our death. Otherwise, knowing their death to be planned, to go head-first into the same, and not to escape from it when they can, is to kill their own selves,—a crime which God doth very greatly abhor. Wherefore 'tis ever the best plan to send them on ahead as envoys, and parry their assault, as

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did Blanche d'Auverbruckt to her husband, the Sieur de Flavy, Captain of Compiègne and Governor thereof, the same who did betray the maid of Orleans, and was cause of her death and undoing. Now this lady Blanche, learning that her husband did plot to have her drowned, got beforehand with him, and by aid of his barber did smother and strangle him, for which deed our King Charles VII.<sup>8</sup> gave her instantly his pardon; though for the obtaining of this 'tis like the husband's treason went for much,—more indeed than any other reason. These facts are to be found in the *Chronicles of France*, and particularly in those of *Guyenne*.

The same was done by a certain Madame de la Borne, in the reign of Francis I.<sup>9</sup> This lady did accuse and inform against her husband for sundry follies committed and crimes, it may be monstrous crimes, he had done against her and other women. She had him thrown into prison, pleaded against him and finally got his head cut off. I have heard my grandmother tell the tale, who used to say she was of good family and a very handsome woman. Well! she at any rate did get well beforehand!

Queen Jeanne of Naples,<sup>10</sup> the First of that name, did the like toward the Infanta of Majorca, her third husband, whose head she did cause to be cut off for the reason I have named in the Discourse dealing with him. But it may well be she did also fear him, and was fain to be rid of him the first. Herein was she much in the right, and all women in like case, to act thus when they are suspicious of their gallants' purpose.

I have heard speak of many ladies that have bravely escaped in this fashion. Nay! I have known one, who having been found by her husband with her lover, he said

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never a word to one or the other, but departed in fierce anger, and left her there in the chamber with her lover, sore amazed and in much despair and doubt. Still the lady had spirit enough to declare, "He has done naught nor said naught to me this time; but I am sore afraid he doth bear rancour and secret spite. Now if I were only sure he was minded to do me to death, I would take thought how to make *him* feel death the first." Fortune was so kind to her after some while that the husband did die of himself. And hereof was she right glad, for never after his discovery had he made her good cheer, no matter what attention and consideration she showed him.

Yet another question is there in dispute as concerning these same madmen, these furious husbands and perilous cuckolds, to wit on which of the two they set and work their vengeance, whether on their wives, or their wives' lovers.

Some there be which have declared, "on the woman only," basing their doctrine on the Italian proverb *morta la bastia, morta la rabbia o vereno*—"when the beast is dead, the madness, or venom, is dead." For they think, so it would seem, to be quite cured of their hurt when they have once killed her who caused the pain, herein doing neither more nor less than they who have been bit or stung by a scorpion. The most sovran remedy these have is to take the creature, kill and crush it flat, and put it on the bite or wound it hath made. The same are ready to say, and do commonly say, 'tis the women who are the more deserving of punishment. I here refer to great ladies and of high rank, and not to humble, common and of low degree. For suchlike it is, by their lovely charms, their confidences, their orders given and soft



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words spoken, who do provoke the first skirmishes and bring on the battle, whereas the men do but follow their lead. But such as do call for war and begin it, are more deserving of blame than such as only fight in self-defence. For oftentimes men adventure themselves in the like dangerous places and on such high emprise, only when challenged by the ladies, who do signify in divers fashions their predilection. Just as we see in a great, good, well-guarded frontier town, it is exceeding difficult to attack the same unawares or surprise it, unless there be some secret undertaking among some of the inhabitants, and some that do encourage the assailants to the attempt and entice them on and give them a hand of succour.

Now, forasmuch as women are something more fragile than men, they must be forgiven, and it should be remembered how that, when once they have begun to love and set love in their hearts, they will achieve it at what cost soever, not content,—not all of them that is,—to brood over it within, and little by little waste away, and grow dried up and sickly, and spoil their beauty therefor,—which is the reason they do long to be cured of it and get pleasure therefrom, and not die *in ferret's fashion*, as the saying is.<sup>11</sup>

Of a surety I have known not a few fair ladies of this humour, who have been foremost to make love to the other sex, even sooner than the men, and for divers accounts,—some for that they see them handsome, brave, valiant and lovable; others to cozen them out of a sum of hard cash; others to get of them pearls and precious stones, and dresses of cloth of gold and of silver. And I have seen them take as great pains to get these things as a merchant to sell his commodities, and indeed they say the

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woman who takes presents, sells herself. Some again, to win Court favour; others to win the like with men of the law. Thus several fair dames I have known, who though having no right on their side, yet did get it over to them by means of their fleshly charms and bodily beauty. Yet others again, only to live delicately by the giving of their body.

Many women have I seen so enamoured of their lovers, that they would, so to speak, chase them and run amain after them, causing the world to cast scorn at them therefor.

I once knew a very fair lady so enamoured of a Lord of the great world, that whereas commonly lovers do wear the colours of their ladies, this one on the contrary would be wearing those of her gallant. I could quite well name the colours, but that would be telling over much.

I knew yet another, whose husband, having affronted her lover at a tourney which was held at Court, the while he was in the dancing-hall and was celebrating his triumph, she did out of despite dress herself in man's clothes and went to meet her lover and offer him her favours in masquerade,—for so enamoured of him was she, as that she was like to die thereof.

I knew an honourable gentleman, and one of the least spoken against at Court, who did one day manifest desire to be lover to a very fair and honourable lady, if ever there was one; but whereas she made many advances on her side, he on his stood on guard for many reasons and accounts. But the said lady, having set her love on him, and having cast the die this way at whatsoever hazard, as she did herself declare, did never cease to entice him to her by the fairest words of love that ever she could speak,

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saying amongst other things: "Nay! but suffer at any rate that I love you, if you will not love me; and look not to my deserts, but rather to the love and passion I do bear you,"—though in actual truth she did outbalance the gentleman on the score of perfections. In this case what could the gentleman have done but love her, as she was very fain to love him, and serve her; then ask the salary and reward of his service. This he had in due course, as is but reasonable that whoever doth a favour be paid therefor.

I could allege an infinite number of such ladies, which do seek toward lovers rather than are sought. And I will tell you why they have more blame than their lovers. Once they have assailed their man, they do never leave off till they gain their end and entice him by their alluring looks, their charms, the pretty made-up graces they do study to display in an hundred thousand fashions, by the subtle bepainting of their face, if it be not beautiful, their fine head-dresses, the rich and rare fashions of wearing their hair, so aptly suited to their beauty, their magnificent, stately costumes, and above all by their dainty and half-wanton words, as well as by their pretty, frolic gestures and familiarities, and lastly by gifts and presents. So this is how men are taken: and being once taken, needs must they take advantage of their captors. Wherefore 'tis maintained their husbands are fairly bound to wreak their vengeance on them.

Others hold the husband should take his satisfaction of the men, when that he can, just as one would of such as lay siege to a town. For they it is are the first to sound the challenge and call on the place to surrender, the first to make reconnaissances and approaches, the first to

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throw up entrenchments of gabions and raise bastions and dig trenches, the first to plant batteries and advance to the assault, and the first to open negotiations; and even so is it, they allege, with lovers. For like doughty, valiant and determined soldiers they do assault the fortress of ladies' chastity, till these, after all fashions of assault and modes of importunity have been duly observed, are constrained to make signal of capitulation and receive their pleasant foes within their fortifications. Wherein methinks they are not so blameworthy as they would fain make out; for indeed to be rid of an importunate beggar is very difficult without leaving somewhat of one's own behind. So have I seen many who by their long service and much perseverance have at length had their will of their mistresses, who at the first would not, so to say, have given them their *cul a baiser*, constraining them, or at any rate some of them, to this degree that out of pure pity, and tear in eye, they did give them their way. Just as at Paris a man doth very often give an alms to the beggars about an inn door more by reason of their importunity than from devotion or the love of God. The same is the case with many women, who yield rather for being over-importuned than because they are really in love—as also with great and powerful wooers, men whom they do fear and dare not refuse because of their high authority, dreading to do them a displeasure and thereafter to receive scandal and annoyance of them or a deliberate affront or great hurt and sore disparagement to their honour. For verily have I seen great mischiefs happen in suchlike conjunctions.

This is why those evil-minded husbands, which take such delight in blood and murder and evil entreatment of

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their wives, should not be so hasty, but ought first to make a secret inquiry into all matters, albeit such knowledge may well be grievous to them and very like to make them scratch their head for its sore itching thereat, and this even though some, wretches that they are, do give their wives all the occasion in the world to go astray.

Thus I once knew a great Prince of a foreign country, who had married a very fair and honourable lady. Yet did he very often leave her to go with another woman, which was supposed to be a famous courtesan, though others thought she was a lady of honour whom he had debauched. But not satisfied with this, when he had her to sleep with him, it was in a low-roofed chamber underneath that of his wife and underneath her bed. Then when he was fain to embrace his mistress, he was not content with the wrong he was doing his lady already, but in derision and mockery would with a half-pike knock two or three blows on the floor and shout up to his wife: "A health to you, wife mine!" This scorn and insult was repeated several days, and did so anger his wife that out of despair and desire of vengeance she did accost a very honourable gentleman one day and said to him privily: "Sir! I am fain you should have your pleasure of me; otherwise do I know of means whereby to undo you." The other, right glad of so fine an adventure, did in no wise refuse her. Wherefore, so soon as her husband had his fair leman in his arms, and she likewise her fond lover, and he would cry, "A health!" to her, then would she answer him in the same coin, crying, "And I drink to you!" or else, "I pledge you back, good Sir!"

These toasts and challenges and replies, so made and arranged as to suit with the acts of each, continued some

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longish while, till at length the Prince, a wily and suspicious man, did suspect something. So setting a watch, he did discover how his wife was gaily cuckolding him all the while, and making good cheer and drinking toasts just as well as he was, by way of retaliation and revenge. Then having made sure it was verily so, he did quick alter and transform his comedy into a tragedy; and having challenged her for the last time with his toast, and she having rendered him back his answer and as good as he gave, he did instantly mount upstairs, and forcing and breaking down the door, rushes in and reproaches her for her ill-doing. But she doth make answer on her side in this wise, "I know well I am a dead woman. So kill me bodily; I am not afraid of death, and do welcome it gladly, now I am avenged on you, seeing I have made you cuckold. For you did give me great occasion thereto, without which I had never gone astray. I had vowed all fidelity to you, and never should I have broken my troth for all the temptations in the whole world. Nay! you were no wise worthy of so honest a wife as I. So kill me straightway; but if there is any pity in your hand, pardon, I beseech you, this poor gentleman, who of himself is no whit to blame, for I did invite him and urge him to help me to my vengeance." The Prince, over cruel altogether, doth ruthlessly kill the twain. But what else should this unhappy Princess have done in view of the indignities and insults of her husband, if not what, in despair of any other succour in all the world, she did? Some there be will excuse her, some accuse her; many arguments and good reasons may be alleged thereanent on either side.

In the *Cent Nouvelles* of the Queen of Navarre is an

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almost similar tale, and a very fine one to boot, of the Queen of Naples, who in like manner did revenge herself on the King her husband. Yet was the end thereof not so tragical.

7.



Now let us have done with these demons and mad, furious cuckolds and speak no more of them, for that they be odious and unpleasing, seeing I should never have finished if I should tell of them all, and moreover the subject is neither good nor pleasant. Let us discourse a while of kindly cuckolds, such as are good fellows, of placable humour, men easy to deal with and of a holy patience, well humoured and readily appeased, that shut the eyes and are—good-natured fools.

Now of these some are predestined of their very nature to be so, some know how it is before they marry, to wit, know that their ladies, widows or maids, have already gone astray; others again know naught of it at all, but marry them on trust, on the word of their fathers and mothers, their family and friends.

I have known not a few which have married women and girls of loose life, whom they well knew had been passed in review by sundry Kings, Princes, Lords, gentlemen and other folk. Yet for love of them, or attracted by their goods, jewels and money that they had won at the trade of love, have made no scruple to wed them. However I propose here to speak only of the girls of this sort.

I have heard speak of a mistress of a very great and sovereign Prince, who being enamoured of a certain

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gentleman, and in such wise behaving herself toward him as to have received the first fruits of his love, was so desirous thereof that she did keep him a whole month in her closet, feeding him on fortifying foods, savoury soups, dainty and comforting meats, the better to distil and draw off his substance. Thus having made her first apprenticeship with him, did she continue her lessons under him so long as he lived, and under others too. Afterward she did marry at the age of forty-five years to a Lord,<sup>1</sup> who found naught to say against her, but rather was right proud of so rare a marriage as he had with her.

Boccaccio repeats a proverb which was current in his day to the effect that *a mouth once kissed* (others have it differently) *is never out of luck; her fortune is like the moon, and waxeth ever anew*. This proverb he doth quote in connection with a story he relates of that fair daughter of the Sultan of Egypt who did pass and repass by the weapons of nine different lovers, one after the other, at the least three thousand times in all. At long last was she delivered to the King of Garba a pure virgin, that is, 'twas so pretended, as pure as she was at the first promised to him; and he found no objection to make, but was very well pleased. The tale thereof is a right good one.

I have heard a great man declare that, with many great men, though not all it may be supposed, no heed is paid in case of women of this sort to the fact, though three or four lovers have passed them through their hands, before they make them their wives. This he said anent of a story of a great Lord who was deeply enamoured of a great lady, and one of something higher quality than himself, and she loved him back. However there fell out some hindrance that they did not wed as they did expect one with the



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other. Whereupon this great nobleman, the which I have just spoken of, did straightway ask: "Did he mount the little jade, anyway?" And when he was answered, "no!"—in the other's opinion and by what men told him, "So much the worse then," he added, "for at any rate they had had so much satisfaction one of the other, and no harm would have been done!" For among the great no heed is paid to these rules and scruples of maidenhood, seeing that for these grand alliances everything must be excused. Only too delighted are they, the good husbands and gentle suckling cuckolds.

At the time when King Charles did make the circuit of his Kingdom, there was left behind in a certain good town, which I could name very well had I so wished, a female child whereof an unmarried girl of a very good house had been delivered. So the babe was given to a poor woman to nurse and rear, and there was advanced to her a sum of two hundred crowns for her pains. The said poor woman did nurse the infant and manage it so well that in fifteen years' time the girl grew up very fair, and gave herself to a life of pleasure. For never another thought had she of her mother, who in four months after wedded a very great nobleman. Ah! how many such have I known of either sex, where the like things have been, and no man suspecting aught!

I once heard tell, when I was in Spain, of a great Lord of Andalusia who had married a sister of his to another very great Lord, and who three days after the marriage was consummated, came and said to him thus: *Señor hermano, agora que soys cazado con my herman, y l'havays bien godida solo, yo le hago aher que siendo hija, tal y tal goxaron d'ella. De lo passado no tenga cuydado, que poca*

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*cosa es. Dell futuro quartate, que mas y mucho a vos toca.*  
(My Lord and brother, now that you are married to my sister and alone enjoy her favours, it behooves you to know that when she was yet unwed, such and such an one did have her. Take no heed of the past, for truly 'tis but a small thing; but beware of the future, seeing now it doth touch you much more close),—as much as to say that what is done is done, and there is no need to talk about it, but it were well to be careful of the future, for this is more nearly concerned with a man's honour than is the past.

Some there be are of this humour, thinking it not so ill to be cuckold in the bud, but very ill in the flower,—and there is some reason in this.

I have likewise heard speak of a great Lord of a foreign land, which had a daughter who was one of the fairest women in the world; and she being sought in marriage by another great Lord who was well worthy of her was bestowed on him by her father. But before ever he could let her go forth the house, he was fain to try her himself, declaring he would not easily let go so fine a mount and one which he had so carefully trained, without himself having first ridden thereon, and found out how she could go for the future. I know not whether it be true, but I have heard say it is, and that not only he did make the essay, but another comely and gallant gentleman to boot. And yet did not the husband thereafter find anything bitter, but all as sweet as sugar. He had been very hard to please if he had otherwise, for she was one of the fairest dames in all the world.

I have heard the like tales told of many other fathers, and in especial of one very great nobleman, with regard to

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their daughters. For herein are they said to have shown no more conscience than the Cock in Aesop's Fable. This last, when he was met by the Fox, who did threaten him and declare he purposed to kill him, did therefore proceed to rehearse all the benefits he wrought for mankind and above all else the fair and excellent poultry that came from him. To this the fox made answer, "Ha, ha!" said he, "that is just my quarrel with you, sir gallant! For so lecherous are you, you make no difficulty to tread your own daughters as readily as the other hens," and for this crime did put him to death. Verily a stern and artful judge!

I leave you then to imagine what some maids may do with their lovers,—for never yet was there a maid but had or was fain to have a lover,—and that some there be that brothers, cousins and kinsfolk have done the like with.

In our own days Ferdinand, King of Naples,<sup>2</sup> knew thus in wedlock his own aunt, daughter of the King of Castile, at the age of 13 or 14 years, but this was by dispensation of the Pope. Difficulties were raised at the time as to whether this ought to be or could be so given. Herein he but followed the example of Caligula, the Roman Emperor, who did debauch and have intercourse with each of his sisters, one after the other. And above and beyond all the rest, he did love exceedingly the youngest, named Drusilla, whom when only a lad he had deflowered. And later, being then married to one Lucius Cassius Longinus, a man of consular rank, he did take her from her husband, and lived with her openly, as if she had been his wife,—so much so indeed that having fallen sick on one occasion, he made her heiress of all his property, including the Empire itself. But it fell out she died, which he did

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grieve for so exceedingly sore that he made proclamation to close the Courts and stay all other business, in order to constrain the people to make public mourning along with him. And for a length of time he wore his hair long and beard untrimmed for her sake; and when he was haranguing the Senate, the People or his soldiers, never swore but by the name of Drusilla.

As for his other sisters, when that he had had his fill of them, he did prostitute them and gave them up to his chief pages which he had reared up and known in very foul fashion. Still even so he had done them no outrageous ill, seeing they were accustomed thereto, and that it was a pleasant injury, as I have heard it called by some maids on being deflowered and some women who had been ravished. But over and above this, he put a thousand indignities upon them; he sent them into exile, he took from them all their rings and jewels to turn into money, having wasted and ill guided all the vast sums Tiberius had left him. Natheless did the poor girls, having after his death come back from banishment, and seeing the body of their brother ill and very meanly buried under a few clods of earth, have it disinterred and burned and duly buried as honourably as they could. Surely a good and noble deed on the part of sisters to a brother so graceless and unnatural!

The Italian, by way of excusing the illicit love of his countryman, says that *quando messer Bernardo, il bucciacchio sta in colera et in sua rabbia, non riceve legge, et non perdona a nissuna dama*,—"when messer Bernardo, the young ox, stand up in anger and in his passion, he will receive no laws and spare no lady."

We can find plenty of examples amongst the Ancients of

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such as have done the same. However to come back to our proper subject, I have heard a tale of one who having married a fair and honourable damsel to one of his friends, and boasting that he had given him a right good and noble mount, sound, clean and free from knots and malanders, as he put it, and that he lay the more under obligation to him therefor, he was answered by one of the company, who said aside to one of his comrades: "That is all quite true, if only she had not been mounted and ridden so young and far too soon. For it has made her a bit *foulée* in front."

But likewise I would fain ask these noble husbands whether, if such mounts had not often some fault, some little thing wrong with them, some defect or blemish, they would make the match with others who are more deserving than they, like horse-dealers who do all they can to get rid of their blemished horses, but always with those that know naught of the matter. Even so, as I have heard many a father say, 'tis a very fine riddance to be quit of a blemished daughter, or one that doth begin to be so, or seems by her looks like to be.

How many damsels of the great world I know who have not carried their maidenhood to the couch of Hymen, but who have for all that been well instructed of their mothers, or other their kinswomen and friends, right cunning pimps as they are, to make a good show at this first assault. Divers are the means and contrivances they do resort to with artful subtleties, to make their husbands think it well and convince them never a breach has been made before. The most part resort to the making of a desperate resistance and defence at this point of attack, and do fight obstinately to the last extremity. Whereof there are some

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husbands much delighted, for they do firmly believe they have had all the honour and made the first conquest, like right determined and intrepid soldiers. Then next morning they have fine tales to tell, how they have strutted it like little cocks or cockerels that have eat much millet-seed in the evening, making many boasts to their comrades and friends, and even mayhap to the very men who have been the first to invade the fortress, unwittingly to them. Whereat these do laugh their fill in their sleeves, and with the women their mistresses, and boast they did their part well too, and gave the damsels as good as they got.

Some suspicious husbands there be however who hold all this resistance as of bad augury, and take no satisfaction in seeing them so recalcitrant. Like one I know who asked his wife why did she thus play the prude and make difficulties, and if she disdained him so much as all that; but she thinking to make excuse and put off the fault on something else than disdain, told him 'twas because she was afraid he would hurt her. To this he retorted, "Now have you given proof positive, for no hurt can be known without having been first suffered." But she was wily, and denied, saying she had heard tell of it by some of her companions who had been married, and had so advised her. And, "Hum! fine advice truly and fine words!" was all he could say.

Another remedy these women recommend is this,—next morning after their wedlock to show their linen stained with drops of blood, the which the poor girls shed in the cruel work of their deflowering. So is it done in Spain, where they do publicly display from the window the afore-

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said linen, crying aloud, "Virgen la tenemos,"—"we hold her for a maid."

Likewise of a surety I have heard say that at Viterbo<sup>s</sup> this custom is similarly observed. Moreover, seeing such damsels as have previously affronted the battle cannot make this display of their own blood, they have devised the plan, as I have heard say, and as several young courtesans at Rome have themselves assured me, the better to sell their maidenhood, of staining the said linen with pigeon's blood, which is the most meet of all for the purpose. So next morning the husband doth see the blood and doth feel a great satisfaction thereof, and doth believe firmly 'tis the virginal blood of his wife. He thinks himself a gallant and happy man, but he is sore deceived all the while.

Hereanent will I repeat the following merry tale of a gentleman who had his string tied in a knot the first night of his wedlock; but the bride, who was not one of the very fair and high-born sort, fearing he would be sore enraged thereat, did not fail, by advice of her good comrades, matrons, kinswomen and good friends, to have the bit of linen stained as usual. But the mischief for her was that the husband was so sore tied that he could do naught at all, albeit she thought no harm to make him a very enticing display and deck herself for the assault as well as ever she could, and lie conveniently without playing the prude or making any show of reluctance or deviltry. At least so the lookers-on, hid near by according to custom, did report; and indeed she did so the better to conceal the loss of her maidenhood elsewhere. But for all the red linen, he had really done naught whatever.

At night, by established custom, the midnight repast

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having been carried in, there was as usual a worthy guest ready to advise that in the customary wedding scramble they should filch away the sheet, which they did find finely stained with blood. This was instantly displayed and all in attendance were assured by loud cries she was no longer a maid, and here was the evidence her virgin membrane had been deforced and ruptured. The husband, who was quite certain he had done naught, but who nevertheless was fain to pose as a brave and valiant champion, remained sore astounded and wot not what this stained sheet might mean. Only after sufficient pondering, he did begin to suspect some knavish, cunning harlot's trick, yet never breathed a word.

The bride and her confidantes were likewise sore troubled and astounded for that the husband had so missed fire, and that their business was not turning out better. Nothing however was suffered to appear till after a week's time, when lo! the husband found his knot untied, and did straight let fly with might and main. Whereat being right glad and remembering naught else, he went forth and published to all the company how in all good conscience he had now given proof of his prowess and made his wife a true wife and a proper married woman; but did confess that up till then he had been seized with absolute impotence to do aught. Hereupon those present at the time did hold diverse discourse, and cast much blame and scorn on the bride, whom all had deemed a wife by her stained linen. Thus did she bring scandal on herself,—albeit she was not properly speaking an altogether cause thereof, but rather her husband, who by feebleness, slackness and lack of vigour did spoil his own wedding.



Again, there are some husbands that do know at their first night as to the maidenhood of their wives, whether they have won it or no, by the signs they find. So one that I know, who did marry a wife in second wedlock; but the wife was for making him believe her first husband had never touched her, by reason of his impotence, and that she was virgin and a maid, as much as before being married at all. Yet did he find her of such ample capacity that he exclaimed, "What ho! are *you* the maid of Marolles, so tight and small as they told me you were?" So he had just to take it as it was, and make the best of it. For if her first husband had never touched her, as was quite true, yet many another man had.

8.

**B**UT what are we to say of some mothers who, seeing the impotence of their sons-in-law, or that they have the string knotted or some other defect, are procuresses to their own daughters. Thus to win their jointures, they get them to yield to others, and often to become with child by them, to the end they may have offspring to inherit after the death of the father.

I know one such who was ready enough to give this counsel to her daughter, and indeed spared no effort to bring it about, but the misfortune for her was that never could she have a child at all. Also I know a husband who, not being able to do aught to his wife, did yield his place to a big lackey he had, a handsome lad, to lie with his wife and deflower her as she slept, and in this way save his

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honour. But she did discover the trick and the lackey had no success. For which cause they had a long suit at law, and finally were separated.

King Henry of Castile<sup>1</sup> did the like, who as Fulgosi<sup>2</sup> relates, seeing he could make no children with his wife, did call in the help of a handsome young gentleman of his Court to make them for him. The which he did; and for his pains the King gave him great estates and advanced him in all honours, distinctions and dignities. Little doubt the wife was grateful to him therefor, and did find the arrangement much to her liking. This is what I call an accommodating cuckold!

As to these "knotted strings" spoken of above, there was lately a law process thereanent in the Court of the Parliament of Paris, between the Sieur de Bray, High Treasurer, and his wife, to whom he could do naught, suffering as he did from this or other like defect, for which the wife, once well married, did call him to account. It was ordered by the Court that they should be visited, the two of them, by great doctors expert in these matters. The husband did choose his, and the wife hers. And hereon was writ a right merry sonnet at the Court, the which a great lady read over to me herself, and gave me, whenas I was dining with her. 'Twas said a lady had writ it, though others said a man. Here it is:

### SONNET

Entre les médecins renommés à Paris  
En sçavoir, en espreuve, en science, en doctrine,  
Pour juger l'imparfait de la coupe androgine,  
Par de Bray et sa femme ont esté sept choisis,

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De Bray a eu pour lui les trois de moindre prix,  
Le Court, l'Endormy, Piètre: et sa femme plus fine,  
Les quatre plus experts en l'art de médecine,  
Le Grand, le Gros, Duret et Vigoureux a pris.

On peut par là juger qui des deux gagnera,  
Et si le Grand du Court victorieux sera,  
Vigoureux d'Endormy, le Gros, Duret, de Piètre.

Et de Bray n'ayant point ces deux de son costé,  
Estant tant imparfait que mari le peut estre,  
A faute de bon droict en sera débouté.

(Among all the great doctors of Paris, famed for knowledge, skill, science and learning, seven were chosen out by de Bray and his wife, to judge of the defect in the cup of man and wife.—De Bray has on his side the three of lesser price, Le Court, l'Endormy, Piètre (Drs. Short, Sleepy, Puny); his wife has been cleverer and taken Le Grand, Le Gros, Duret and Vigoureux (Drs. Tall, Stout, Hardy and Vigorous).—From this it may be guessed which of the pair will gain the day, and if Le Grand will give a good account of Le Court, Vigoureaux, of Endormy, Le Gros and Duret of Piètre.—So de Bray not having these two on his side, and being as ill-dowered as a husband can well be, for lack of a good case will surely be nonsuited.)

I have heard speak of another husband, who did hold his new-made wife in his arms the first night; and she was so ravished with delight and pleasure that quite forgetting herself she could not refrain from a slight turning and twisting and mobile action of the body, such as new wed wives are scarce wont to make. At this he said naught

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else, but only, "Ha, ha ! I know now," and went on his way to the end. These be our cuckolds *in embryo*, of the which I could tell thousands of tales, but I should never have done. And the worst thing I see in them is when they wed cow and calf at once, as the saying is, and take them when already great with child. Like one I know, who had married a very fair and honourable damsel, by the favour and wish of their Prince and feudal Lord, who was much attached to the said gentleman and had made the marriage. But at the end of a week it became known she was with child, and she did actually publish it abroad, the better to play her part. The Prince, who had always suspected some love-making between her and another, said to her, "My lady ! I have carefully writ down on my tablets the day and hour of your marriage ; when folk shall set these against the time of your bringing to bed, you will have bitter shame !" But she at this word only blushed a little, and did naught else thereanent, but only kept ever the mien and bearing of a *donna da ben* (virtuous lady).

Then again there are some daughters which do so fear their father and mother they had rather lose the life out of their bodies than their maidenhood, dreading their parents an hundred times more than their husbands.

I have heard speak of a very fair and honourable damsel, who being sore tempted by her lover to take her pleasure of his love, did answer "under this cloak of marriage which doth cover all, we will take our joy with a right good will."

Another, being eagerly sought after by a great nobleman, she said to him, "Petition our Prince and put some pressure on him, that he wed me soon to him that is now

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my suitor, and let me quickly make good my marriage that he hath promised me. The day after my wedding, if we meet not one another, why! the bargain is off!"

I know a lady who was wooed to love but four days before her bridal by a gentleman, and kinsman of her husband; yet six days after he did enjoy his will,—at any rate he did make boast to the effect. Nor was it hard to believe, for they did show such familiarity the one to the other, you would have said they had been brought up together all their lives. Moreover he did even tell sundry signs and marks she had on her body, and further that they did continue their merry sport long while after. The gentleman always declared the familiarity that did afford them opportunity to come so far was, that in order to carry out a masquerade they did change clothes with one another. He took the dress of his mistress and she that of her admirer, whereat the husband did nothing but laugh, though some there were did find occasion to blame them and think ill of the thing.

There was made a song about it at Court,—of a husband who was married o' Tuesday and cuckolded o' Thursday, a fair rate of progress in sooth!

What shall we say of another damsel who was long while wooed by a gentleman of a good house and rich, but for all that niggardly and not worthy of her? So being hard pressed at the instance of her family to marry him, she made answer she had liever die than marry him, and that he should be spoken thereof to her or to her kinsfolk. For, she declared, if they did force her to marry him, she would only make him cuckold. But for all that it behooved to go by that road, for so was she constrained by the urgency of all the great folk, men and women, who

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had influence and authority over her, as well as by her kinsfolks' orders.

On the eve of her bridal, her husband seeing her all sad and pensive, asked her what ailed her; and she did answer him angrily, "You would never believe me, and be persuaded to leave off your pursuit of me. You know what I have always said, that if ever I were so unfortunate as to become your wife, I would make you cuckold. And I swear I will do so, and keep my word to you." She was in no wise dainty about saying the same before sundry of her lady companions and male admirers. Afterward rest assured she was as good as her word, and did show him she was a good and true woman, for that she kept her promise faithfully!

I leave you to judge whether she is to be blamed, for a man once warned should be twice careful, and she did plainly tell him the ill plight he would fall into. So why would he not take heed? But indeed he thought little enough of what she said.

These maids which thus let themselves go astray straightway after being married, but do as the Italian proverb saith: *Che la vacca, ché é stata molto tempo ligata, corre più ché quella ché ha havuto sempre piana libertà*,—"The cow that hath been long tied up, runs more wild than one that hath ever had her full liberty." Thus did the first wife of Baldwyn, King of Jerusalem, whom I have spoken of before, who having been forced to take the veil by her husband, brake from the cloister and escaped out, and making now for Constantinople, behaved herself in such wanton wise as that she did bestow her favours on all wayfarers by that road, whether going or coming, as well men-at-arms as pilgrims to Jerusalem,

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without heed to her Royal rank. But the reason was the long fast she had had therefrom during her imprisonment.

I might easily name many other such. Well! they are a good sort of cuckolds these, as are likewise those others which suffer their wives' unfaithfulness, when these be fair and much sought after for their beauty, and abandon them to it, in order to win favour for themselves, and draw profit and wealth therefrom. Many such are to be seen at the Courts of great Kings and Princes, the which do get good advantage thereby; for from poor men as they were aforetime, whether from pledging of their goods, or by some process of law, or mayhap through the cost of warlike expeditions, they be brought low, are they straight raised up again and enriched greatly by way of their good wives' *trou*. Yet do they find no diminution whatever in that same place, but rather augmentation!

Herein was the case different with a very fair lady I have heard tell of, for that she had lost the half of her affair by misadventure, her husband having, so they said, given her the pox which had eaten it away for her.

Truly the favours and benefits of the great may well shake the most chaste hearts, and are cause of many and many a cuckoldry. And hereanent I have heard the tale related of a foreign Prince<sup>s</sup> who was appointed General by his Sovereign Prince and master of a great expedition of War he had ordered to be made, and left his wife behind, one of the fairest ladies in all Christendom, at his Master's Court. But this last did set to and make suit to her to such effect that he very soon shook and laid low her resolve, and had his will so far that he did get her with child.

The husband, returning at the end of twelve or thirteen

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months, doth find her in this state, and though sore grieved and very wroth against her, durst not ask her the how and why of it. 'Twas for her, and very adroit she was, to frame her excuses, and a certain brother-in-law of hers to help her out. And this-like was the plea she made out: " 'Tis the issue of your campaign that is cause of this, which hath been taken so ill by your Master,—for indeed he did gain little profit thereby. So sorely have you been blamed in your absence for that you did not carry out his behests better, that had not your Lord set his love on me, you had verily been undone; and so to save you from undoing, I have e'en suffered myself to be undone. Your honour is as much concerned as mine own, and more, and for your advancement I have not spared the most precious thing I possess. Reflect then if I have done so ill as you might say at first; for without me, your life, your honour and favour would all have been risked. You are in better case than ever, while the matter is not so public that the stain to your repute be too manifest. Wherefore, I beseech you to excuse and forgive me for that I have done."

The brother-in-law, who was of the best at a specious tale, and who mayhap had somewhat to do with the lady's condition, added thereto yet other good and weighty words, so that at the last all ended well. Thus was peace made, and the twain were of better accord than ever living together in all freedom and good fellowship. Yet, or so have I heard tell, did the Prince their master, the which had done the wrong and had made all the difficulty, never esteem him so highly as he had done aforetime, for having taken the thing so mildly. Never after did he deem him a man of such high-souled honour as he had



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thought him previously, though in his heart of hearts he was right glad the poor lady had not to suffer for the pleasure she had given him. I have known sundry, both men and women, ready to excuse the lady in question, and to hold she did well so to suffer her own undoing in order to save her husband and set him back again in his Sovereign's favour.

Ah! how many examples are to be found to match this; as that of a great lady who did save her husband's life, the which had been condemned to death in full Court, having been convicted of great peculations and malversations in his government and office. For which thing the husband did after love her well all his life.

I have heard speak again of a great Lord, who had been condemned to have his head cut off; but lo! he being already set on the scaffold, his pardon did arrive, the which his daughter, one of the fairest of women,<sup>4</sup> had obtained. Whereon, being come down off the scaffold, he did say this word, and naught else at all: "God save my girl's good *motte*, which hath saved my life!"

Saint Augustine doth express a doubt whether a certain citizen of Antioch, a Christian, did sin, when to acquit him of a heavy sum of money for the which he was in strict confinement, he gave his wife leave to lie with a gentleman of greath wealth, who undertook to free him from his debt.

If such is the opinion of Saint Augustine, what would he not allow to many women, widows and maids, who to redeem their fathers, kinsmen, yea! sometimes their husbands themselves, do surrender their gentle body under stress of many and sundry trials that fall to their lot, as imprisonment, enslavement, peril to life itself, assaults

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and takings of cities, and in a word an host of other the like incommodities. Nay! sometimes to gain over captains and soldiers, to cause them to fight stubbornly and hold their ground, or to sustain a siege or retake a place,—I could recount an hundred instances,—they will go the length of fearlessly prostituting their chastity to gain their ends. What evil report or scandal can come to them for this? None surely, but rather much glory and advantage.

Who then will deny it to be a good thing on occasion to be cuckold, forasmuch as a man may draw therefrom such advantages in the way of life saved and favour regained, of honour, dignities and riches? How many do I know in like case; and have heard speak of many more which have been advanced by the beauty and bodies of their wives!

I wish not to offend any, but I will take upon me to say this much, that I have it from not a few, both men and women, how ladies have served their mates right well, and how the merits of some of them have not availed them near so much as their wives'.

I know a great lady of much adroit skill who got the Order of St. Michael bestowed on her husband, he being at that time the only one that had it along with the two greatest Princes of Christendom. She would oft tell him, and say out the same before everybody,—for indeed she was of merry demeanour and excellent company: "Ha, ha! my friend, you might have sweated yourself many a long day before you got this pretty bauble to hang at your neck!"

I have heard speak of a great man, in the days of King Francis, who having received the Order, and being fain to make boast thereof one day before M. de la Chastaigne-

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raie, my uncle, did say to him: "Ah! how glad would you be to have this Order hanging at your neck like me!" My uncle, who was ready of tongue and high of hand and hot-tempered, if ever man was, straight replied: "I had rather be dead than have it by the way you had it by!" The other answered never a word, for he knew the man he had to deal with.

I have heard the story told of a great Lord, whose wife had begged for him the patent appointing him to one of the great offices of his district and did bring it to him in his house, his Prince having bestowed it upon him only by favour of his wife. But he would in no wise accept it, forasmuch as he was aware his wife had tarried three months with the Prince in high favour, and not without suspicions of something worse. Herein he did manifest the same nobility of spirit he had shown all his life; yet at the last he did take it, after having done a thing I had rather not name.

And this is how fair ladies have made as many knights as battles, and more,—the which I would name, knowing their names as well as another, were it not I desired to avoid speaking ill of any, or making scandal. And if they have given them these honours, they have brought them much riches as well.

I know one who was but a poor devil when he first brought his wife to Court, the which was a very beautiful woman. And lo! in less than two years they were in good ease and become very rich folk.

## 9.



ELL! we must needs think highly of these ladies which do thus raise their husbands in wealth and position, and make them cuckolds not without compensation. Even as men say of Marguerite de Namur, who was so foolish as to bind herself and give all ever she could to Louis, Duke of Orleans, one who was so great and puissant a Lord already, and brother to the King. To this end she did get from her husband whatever she could, till at the last he became a poor man, and was forced to sell his Earldom of Blois to the said M. d'Orléans. And this latter, —to think of it!—did pay him therefore in the very same coin and goods the man's infatuate wife had given him. Foolish indeed she was, for that she was giving to one greater than herself. And to think that he did laugh at the pair of them, for in good sooth he was the very man so to do, so fickle was he and inconstant in love.

I know a great lady who, having fallen deep in love with a gentleman of the Court, did accordingly suffer him to have his joy of her. And not being able to give him money, seeing her husband ever kept his hoard hid like a priest, did give him the greater part of her precious stones, the which did mount up to a value of thirty thousand crowns. Whence men said at Court he might well begin to build now, since he had plenty of stones laid up and stored away. Soon afterward, being come into a great inheritance and having put her hand on some twenty thousand crowns, she scarce kept any thereof, but her lover did enjoy the greater part. And 'twas said that if this inheritance had not fallen in to her, not

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knowing what else she could give him, she would have given him the very clothes off her body down to her shift itself. Wherein are suchlike scamps and scorners greatly to blame so to set about it and distil and draw off all the substance of these poor creatures, so hot-headed and infatuate with passion and caprice. For their purse, being so oft visited, cannot stay always swelled out and at its full capacity, like the purse in front, which is ever in the same condition, and ever ready for whosoever wills to fish therein, without the captives that have entered and come forth again of the same finding a word to say against it. This worthy gentleman, whom I spoke of as so well stocked with stones, came some time after to die. Then did all his effects, as is the way at Paris, come to be cried and sold at public auction, and so were in this wise reckoned up and known by many persons as having belonged to the lady, not without bitter and deep shame to the same.

There was a great Prince who loving a very honourable lady, did purchase a dozen diamond studs, brilliants of the first water and admirably set, with their Egyptian letters and hieroglyphics, containing a secret and cabalistic meaning, the which he did make a present of to his mistress. But she after looking at the same attentively, said to him that at present she found no need of hieroglyphic lettering, forasmuch as the writings were already done and accomplished between them twain, even as they had been between the gentleman and the fair lady spoken of just above.

I knew once a lady who was forever saying to her husband, how she had rather make him criminal than cuckold. But truly the two words are something equivo-

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cal, and mayhap more or less of both of these fine qualities mated together in her and in her husband.

Yet I have known well plenty of fair ladies that have not done so at all. Rather have they kept the purse of their crown-pieces far tighter drawn than that of their fair body. For, albeit very great ladies, never would they be giving but a ring or two, a few favours and such other little compliments, muffs or scarfs, to wear for love of them to enhance their repute.

Yet have I known one very great lady<sup>1</sup> which was exceeding free and generous herein, for the least of her scarfs and the favours she was used to give her lovers was worth five hundred crowns, a thousand crowns, or even three, whereon was such abundance of embroidery, and pearls, and cyphers, and cabalistic letters and pretty conceits, nothing in all this world ever was richer and rarer to look on. And she was right; for so her gifts, once made, were not hid away in chests or in purses, like those of many other dames, but were displayed before all men. For she deemed that her friends did manifest their worth looking at them and showing them as tokens of her regard, whereas such presents when made in coin did smack rather of common women that give money to their bullies than of high-born and honourable ladies. Sometimes again she would give beautiful rings of rich jewel-work, forasmuch as favours and scarfs are not ordinarily worn, but only on some great and high emprise, whereas a ring on the finger keeps better company and more constant with the wearer.

Though, verily, a gentle and noble-hearted knight should be of this generous complexion that he had rather serve his lady for the beauties which do make her shine

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replendent than for all the shining gold and silver she may have.

For myself, I can boast of having served in my day honourable ladies, and those of no low estate. But truly if I had been willing to take all they gave me and extract from their generosity all I might have had, why, I should be a richer man to-day, whether in goods or money or plenishing, than I am by a good thirty thousand crowns; yet have I always been content to make evident my love rather by my generosity than by my avariciousness.

Without doubt there is good reason for it, that inasmuch as the man doth put somewhat of his own into the purse the woman hath, the woman should likewise put something of hers in the man's. Yet herein must due proportion be kept; for just as the man cannot cast in and give as much of his into the woman's purse as she would fain have, so is the man bound in fairness not to draw from that of the woman all he would. The law of give and take must needs be observed and proper measure kept.

I have moreover before now seen many gentlemen lose the love of their mistresses by reason of the importunity of their demands and their inordinate rapacity. For those, seeing their suit beggary and so eager to have their pay, have utterly broke off the connection and left them in the lurch, and that notwithstanding the excellent service rendered.

Wherefore it is that every noble-minded lover will be loath to be guilty of greed, for his lady's sake that for her sake he should suppose the way to be over-judging a few pence the husband losing his property thereby.

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apace, is more angered thereat ten times over than at a thousand largesses she may have made of her person.

Further, some cuckolds there be that are made such in the way of revenge. I mean that often men who have a grudge against some great Lord or gentleman or other person, from the which they have received injuries and affronts, do avenge their wrongs on them by making love to their wives, whom they do debauch and make fine cuckolds of their enemies.

I knew once a great Prince who had suffered from sundry attempts at rebellion on the part of one of his subjects, a great Lord, yet was all unable to revenge himself, seeing the offender did all he could to escape him, so that the Prince could never lay hands on him. However, his wife having one day come to Court to solicit her husband's pardon and the better ordering of his case, the Prince did appoint with her to meet him to confer thereof in a garden and a chamber adjoining it. But it was really to talk of love to her, wherein he won his triumph on the spot, without much ado, for she was of very accommodating character. Nor did he content himself with having her in his proper person, but did likewise prostitute her to others, down to the very footmen of the chambers. And in this wise would the Prince declare he did feel himself well revenged on his unfaithful subject, having so debauched his wife and crowned his head with a good coronal of horns. Albeit but a subject, he had been fain to play petty king and sovereign; but instead of winning a regal crown of fleurs-de-lis, he had gotten himself a fine one of horns! <sup>2</sup>

This same Prince did a like thing in another case at the instigation of his mother, for he did debauch a Princess



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that was a maid, well knowing she was to wed a certain Prince who had done him displeasure and sore troubled his brother's government. Thus he did deflower her and had his will of her finely; yet after two months was she delivered to the poor Prince as a virgin and to be his wife. The revenge herefor was of the mildest,—pending other action that did ensue later, of a harsh and violent enough sort.<sup>a</sup>

I knew once a very honourable gentleman who, being lover of a fair lady and one of good belongings, did ask her for the recompense of his long love and courtship; but she answered frankly, she would not give him so much as a single doit's worth, seeing she was quite assured he loved her not for this, and bare her not such fond affection for her beauty's sake, as he alleged. His wish was rather, by having his will of her, to avenge himself on her husband, who had done him some displeasure; wherefore he was fain to win this consolation to his pride and to feel for the future he had had the upper hand. But the gentleman, assuring her of the contrary, continued to court her humbly for more than two years longer, and this so faithfully and with such passion, that at the last she did show such ample and full gratitude that she did grant him all she had before refused, declaring that had she not, at the first beginning of their courtship, supposed some idea of vengeance intended to be in his mind, she would immediately have made him as happy a man as she now did at the end, for that her natural bent was to love and prefer him. Note how the lady was able wisely to command her passion so that love did never carry her away to do what all the while she did most desire, for that she

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wished to be loved for her own sake and not merely as a means to a man's vengeance on another.

The late M. du Gua, one of the truly gallant and perfect gentlemen of the world in every way, did invite me to the Court one day to dine with him. He had brought together a dozen of the most learned men of the Court, amongst others the Lord Bishop of Dol,<sup>4</sup> of the house of Espinay in Brittany, MM. de Ronsard, de Baïf, Des Portes, d'Aubigny (the last two are still living, and could contradict me, if I lie), and others whose names I forget. Amongst them all was no man of the sword but only M. du Gua and myself. The discourse during dinner turned on love, and the commodities and incommunities, pleasures and displeasures, good and ill, it brought in its train. After each guest had declared his opinion on the one side or the other, himself did conclude that the sovereign good of its gratification lay in this vengeance it made possible, and prayed each of all these great personages to make a *quatrain* thereon impromptu. This they all did, and I would I had them to insert here; but his Lordship of Dol, whose words were true gold, whether spoke or writ, did bear off the prize.

And doubtless M. du Gua had good reason to maintain this view, as against two great Lords of my acquaintance, whom he did cause to wear the horns for the hatred he bare them. Their wives were very fair women, so in this case he did win double pleasures, satisfaction of his vengeance and gratification of his passions. Many other folk have so revenged themselves and taken delight herein, and accordingly have shared in the same opinion.

Moreover I have known many fair and honourable ladies, who did say and affirm that, when their husbands

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had maltreated or bullied them, rated or censured them, beat them or otherwise ill-used and outraged them, their greatest joy and delight was to give them a pair of horns, and in the act, to think of them, and scoff and mock and make fun of them with their paramours, going so far as to declare they did hereby have a greater access of appetite and sure delight of pleasure than could well be described.

I have heard speak of a fair and honourable lady who, being asked once if ever she had made her husband cuckold, did make answer, "Nay! why should I have made him so, seeing he hath never beat nor even threatened me?" As though implying that, if he had done either one or the other, her champion that she had in front would very soon have revenged her.

And speaking of wit and mockery, I once knew a very honourable and fair lady who, being in these gentle transports of pleasure, did chance by dint of her wild caresses to break an earring she had in the shape of a cornucopia, which was but of black glass, such as were worn in those days. Whereupon she cried instantly to her lover, "Look you, how provident Dame Nature is; I have broken one horn, but here I am making a dozen others for my poor cuckold of a husband, to bedeck him withal some fine feast-day, if he so will."

Another, having left her husband a-bed and asleep, went to see her lover before lying down herself. Then asked he her where her husband was, and she did reply, "He is keeping his bed, guarding his cuckoo's nest for fear another come to lay therein. But 'tis not with his bed, nor his sheets, nor his nest you have to do, but with me,

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who am come to see you. I have left him there as sentinel, though truly he is but a sleepy one."

Talking of sentinels, I have heard a tale told of a certain gentleman of consideration, whom I well knew, who one day coming to words with a very honourable lady, whom also I knew, he did ask her, by way of insult, if she had ever gone on pilgrimage to Saint Mathurin.<sup>5</sup> "Oh, yes!" she replied, "but I could never get into the Church, for so full and so well occupied was it with cuckolds, they would never suffer me to enter. And you, who were one of the foremost, were mounted on the steeple, to act sentinel and warn the others."

I could tell a thousand other such tales, but I should never have done. Yet do I hope to find room for some of them in some corner or other of my book.

### 10.



SOME cuckolds there be which are good-natured and which of their own impulse do invite themselves to this feast of cuckoldry. Thus I have known some who would say to their wives, "Such and such an one is in love with you; I know him well, and he often cometh to visit us, but 'tis for love of you, my pretty. Give him good welcome; he can do us much pleasure, his acquaintance may advantage us greatly."

Others again will say to their wives' admirers, "My wife is in love with you, and right fond of you. Come and see her, you will give her pleasure; you can chat and hold discourse together, and pass the time agreeably." So do they invite folk to feast at their expense. As did the

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Emperor Hadrian,<sup>1</sup> who being one time in Britain (as we read in his Life), carrying on War there, did receive sundry warnings, how that his wife, the Empress Sabina, was making unbridled love with a number of gallant Roman noblemen. As fate would have it, she had writ and despatched a letter from Rome to a certain young Roman gentleman who was with the Emperor in Britain, complaining that he had forgot her, and took no more account of her, and that it must needs be he had some intrigue in that region and that some affected little wanton had caught him in the laces of her beauty. This letter fell by chance into the Emperor's hands; and when the nobleman in question did some days after ask leave of absence under colour of wishing to go to Rome immediately for family affairs of his own, Hadrian said to him in mocking wise, "Well, well! young sir, go there,—and boldly, for the Empress, my wife, is expecting you in all affection." But the Roman hearing this, and finding the Emperor had discovered his secret and might likely play him some ill turn, started the very next night, without saying by your leave or with your leave, and took refuge in Ireland.

Still he had no need to be greatly afraid for all this. Indeed the Emperor himself would often say, being regaled continually with tales of the extravagant love affairs of his wife, "Why, certainly, were I not Emperor, I should have long ago rid me of my wife; but I desire not to show an evil example." As much as to say, it matters not to the great to be in this case, so long as they let it not be known publicly. And what a fate for great men,—one which truly some of them have consented to, though

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not for the same reason! So we see this good Emperor suffering himself complacently to be made cuckold.

Another good Emperor, Marcus Aurelius,<sup>2</sup> who had as wife Faustina, a downright harlot, replied on being advised to put her away, "If we give her up, we are bound also to give up her dowry, which is the Empire." And who would not be cuckold like him for such a prize, or even a less one?

His son, Antonius Verus, surnamed Commodus, though he grew up very cruel, yet held the like language to such as advised him to have the said Faustina, his mother, put to death. So madly in love was she and so hot after a gladiator that she could never be cured of the fierce malady, till at last they bethought them to kill the rascally gladiator and make her drink his blood.

Many and many a husband hath done and doth the same as the good Marcus Aurelius, for they do fear to kill their wives, whores though they be, for dread of losing the great fortunes they have of them, and had rather be rich cuckolds on these easy terms than cruel villains.

Heavens! how many of the sort have I known, who were forever inviting their kinsmen and friends and comrades to come and visit their wives, going so far as to make banquets for them, the better to attract them. Then, when they were there, they would leave them alone with the lady in bedchamber or closet, and so away, with the words, "I leave my wife in your care."

One I knew, a nobleman of the great world, of such behaviour you would have said his whole happiness did rest in this only, to be cuckolded. He seemed to make it his study to give opportunities therefor, and especially never forgot to say this first word, "My wife is in love

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with you; do you love her as well as she loves you, I wonder?" Many a time when he saw his wife with her admirer, he would carry off the company from the room to take a walk, leaving the twain of them together, so giving them good leisure to discuss their loves. And if by any chance he had to return of a sudden into the room, from the very bottom step of the stairs he would begin shouting aloud, calling after someone, spitting or coughing, to the end he might not catch the lovers in the act. For commonly, even though one know of them and suspect their coming, these peeps and surprises are scarce pleasant whether to the one party or the other.

This same Lord was having a fine mansion built one time, and the master mason having asked whether he would not have the cornices horn-amented, he made answer, "I don't know what hornamentation means. Go and ask my wife who understands the thing, and knows geometry; and whatever she tells you to do, do it."

Still worse was it with one I know of, who one day selling one of his estates to a purchaser for fifty thousand crowns, did take forty-five thousand of the sum in gold and silver, and in lieu of the remaining five accepted a unicorn's horn. Huge laughter amid them that knew him; "Ha, ha!" they said, "as if he had not enough horns at home already, that he must fit in this one to boot."

I knew a very great Lord, a brave and gallant man, who did greet a certain honourable gentleman and profess himself his very good servant, yet adding with a smile these words, "My dear Sir, I know not what you have done to my wife, but she is so much in love with you that day and night she doth nothing but speak to me of you, and is forever singing your praises. For all answer I tell

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her I have known you longer than she hath, and am well aware of your worth and deserts, which are great." Who more astonished than this same gentleman? for he had but just taken in this lady on his arm to Vespers, which the Queen was attending, and that was all. However, he at once regained his countenance and replied, "Sir! I am your wife's most humble servant, and deeply grateful for the good opinion she hath of me, and do greatly respect her. Yet do I not make love to her," he went on in a merry tone. "All I do is to pay her my court, herein following the good advice yourself gave me quite lately, seeing she hath much influence with my mistress, whom I may be enabled to wed by her help, and therefore do hope she will give me her assistance."

The Prince had no suspicion and did naught but laugh and admonish the gentleman to court his wife more assiduously than ever. This he did, being right glad under this pretext to be lover to so fair a lady and so great a Princess, who soon made him forget his other mistress he had been fain to wed, and scarce to think of her again, except to find her a convenient mask to dissemble and cover up the whole thing withal. Even so could the Prince not help but feel some pangs of jealousy when one day he did see the said gentleman in the Queen's chamber wearing on his arm a ribband of Spanish scarlet, which had just been brought to Court as a fine novelty, and which he did touch and handle as he talked with him; then going to find his wife who was by the Queen's bedside, lo! he saw she had one that was its very match, which he did likewise touch and handle and proved it to be like it in all respects and part of the same piece as the other. Yet did he breathe never a word, nor take any steps in the matter. And



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indeed in such intrigues it is very needful to cover up their fires with such cinders of discretion and good counsel as that they may never be discovered; for very oft such discovery of the scandal will anger husbands far more against their wives than when the same is done, but all in secret,—herein illustrating the proverb, *Si non caste, tamen caute*,—"If not with virtue, at any rate with prudence."

What terrible scandals and great incommunities have I seen in my time arise from the indiscretions of ladies and their lovers! Yet would the husbands have cared naught at all about the thing, if only they had done their doings *sotto coperte* (under cover, under the rose), as the saying is, and the matter had never seen the light.

I knew one dame who was all for manifesting quite openly her loves and preferences, which she did indulge as if she had had no husband at all, and had been her own mistress entirely, refusing to listen to the counsels of her friends and lovers, who did remonstrate with her and point out the inconveniences she was exposing herself to. And of these she did later reap a sore harvest!

This lady did otherwise than many worthy dames have done at all times, who have gaily enjoyed love and lived a merry life, yet have never given much evidence thereof to the world, except mayhap some small suspicions, that could scarce have revealed the truth even to the most clear-sighted. For they would address their lovers in public so dexterously, and deal with them so adroitly, that neither husbands nor spies, all their life long, could ever get aught to bite at. And when their favourites departed on some journey, or came to die, they would dissemble

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and conceal their grief so cunningly that none ever discovered aught.

I knew a fair and honourable lady, who the day a certain great Lord, her lover, died, did appear in the Queen's chamber with a countenance as gay and smiling as the day before. Some did think highly of her for such discretion, deeming she did so for fear of doing the King displeasure and angering him, for that he liked not the man deceased. Others blamed her, attributing this bearing rather to the lack of true love, wherein 'twas said she was but poorly furnished, like all women who lead the life she did.

I knew on the other hand two fair and honourable ladies, who having lost their lovers in a misadventure of war, did make great sorrow and lamentation, and did make manifest their mourning by their dusky weeds, and eke holy-water vessels and sprinklers of gold engraven with figures, and death's-heads, and all kinds of trophies of dissolution, in their trinkets, jewels and bracelets which they wear. All this did bring much scandal upon them and was greatly to their hurt; though their husbands did take no special heed thereof.

This is how these ladies do themselves hurt by the making public their amours; these we may rightly praise and esteem for their constancy, though not for their discretion, for on this last count what they do is much to their disadvantage.

And if ladies so doing are blameworthy, there be many likewise among their lovers which do deserve reprimand quite as much as they. For they will ever be putting on looks as they were half dead, like she-goats in kid, and a most languorous mien, making eyes and casting ap-

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pealing glances, indulging in passionate gestures and love-sick sighs in company, openly bedecking themselves with their ladies' colours,—in a word giving way to so many silly indiscretions that a blind man could scarce fail to note them. Some of them moreover do the like more in pretence than in reality, desiring to let all the Court understand they are in love in an high quarter, and are happy in their amours. Whereas, God wot, it may well be the ladies would not give them so much as one poor farthing in alms, to save their repute for deeds of charity!

I do know well a certain nobleman and great Lord, who desiring to satisfy the world he was the lover of a fair and honourable lady that I know of, had his little mule held in front of her door, with a couple of his lackeys and pages. As it fell out, M. d'Estrozze and myself did pass that way, and beheld this mystery of the mule and the man's pages and lackeys. He asked instantly where was their master, and they replied he was within, in the lady's house. Hereupon M. d'Estrozze burst out a-laughing, and turning to me, said he would wager his life he was not there at all. And in a moment after he posted his page as sentinel to watch if the pretended lover should come forth; then quickly we hied us to the Queen's chamber, where we found our man,—not without some laughter betwixt him and me.

Then towards evening we went to greet him, and pretending to quarrel with him, did ask him where he was at such and such an hour of the afternoon, and how that he could not deceive us, as we had seen his mule and his pages before the said lady's door. But the fellow, making as though he were vexed we had seen so much and were for this cause attacking him for carrying out an intrigue

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in this high quarter, did confess he was there in very truth. At the same time he besought us not to breathe a word; else should we bring him into sore trouble, and the poor lady would incur scandal and the displeasure of her husband. And this we did faithfully promise him,—laughing all the while heartily and making mock at him, albeit he was a nobleman of no small rank and quality, and declaring we would not speak of the thing, and never a syllable pass our lips.

Finally after some days during which he did continue his trick with the mule too often for our patience, we did discover our artfulness to him, and attacked him with right good will and in good company. This made him desist for very shame, and indeed the lady did know of it by this time through our information, and had the mule and the pages watched one day and incontinently driven away from her door like beggars in front of an inn. Nay! we did even better, for we told the tale to the husband, and that in such merry wise he found it right diverting and laughed heartily at the thing, saying he had no fear this fellow would make him cuckold, and that if ever he should find the said mule and pages stationed at his door, he would have the gates opened and invite them inside, to the end they might be more at ease and sheltered from heat, cold or rain. Not but what others all the whole while were cuckolding him soundly enough. And this is how this noble Lord was fain, at the expense of an honourable lady and her repute, to exalt himself, without any heed to the scandal he might cause thereby.

I knew another nobleman who did bring sore scandal on a very fair and honourable lady by his behaviour. He had for some while been in love with her, and did urge her

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to grant him the little tit-bit reserved for her husband's mouth, but she did refuse him flatly. At last, after several refusals, he said to her, as if in despair, "Well, if you won't, why, you won't; but I give you my oath I will ruin your honour and repute." And to this end he be-thought him to make many comings and goings in secret, yet not so secret but that he made himself seen of set purpose by sundry eyes, and let himself be noted by day and by night frequenting the house where she dwelt. Then he would be ever vaunting and boasting under the rose of his pretended successes, and in company seeking out the lady with more familiarity than he had any call to do, and among his comrades swaggering as the happy lover, and this all in mere pretence. The end was that one night having slipped in very late into the said lady's bedchamber, all muffled in his cloak and hiding from the folk of the house, and after playing sundry of his stealthy tricks, he was suspected by the seneschal of the household, who had a watch set. And though they could not find him, yet did the husband beat his wife and give her several buffets; but later, urged thereto by the seneschal, who said it was not punishment enough, did stab her and kill her; and readily won his pardon therefor from the King. A sad pity truly for the poor lady, who was very fair and beauteous. Afterward the nobleman, which had been cause of all the mischief, did not fare far or well, but was killed in a passage of war, by God's good will, for having so unjustly robbed an honourable lady of her good name and her life.



**T**O tell the truth as to this example and a host of others I have seen, there are some ladies which do themselves great wrong, and which are the true cause of the scandal and dishonour they incur. For 'tis themselves that do provoke the first skirmishes and purposely draw the gallants to them, from the beginning lavishing on them the fondest caresses, favours and familiarities, raising their hopes by all sorts of gentle wiles and flattering words. Yet when it cometh to the point, they will refuse outright, in such wise that the honourable gentlemen which had promised themselves many a pleasant treat of their person, fall into anger and despair and quit them with harsh words. So they depart abusing them and giving them out for the biggest strumpets in all the world, and make out an hundredfold worse tale of their demerits than is really deserved.

And this is why an honourable lady should never set herself to draw a gallant to her, and suffer him to be her servant, if she will not satisfy him at the last according to his deserts and loving service. It behooves her to realize this, unless she would be undone, even when she hath to do with an honourable and gallant man; else from the first beginning, when he doth first accost her, and she sees it is with this end so much desired in view, that he pay his vows to her, but she feeleth no desire to gratify him herein, she should give him his dismissal at the very threshold. For indeed, to speak quite candidly, any woman that doth suffer a lover to court her, doth lay herself under such obligation that she cannot withdraw

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afterward from the fight. She is bound to come to it sooner or later, long though the coming may sometimes be.

There be some dames, however, whose joy is to be served for nothing, but only for the light of their bright eyes. They say they love to be served and courted, that this is their great happiness, and not to come to the final act at all. Their pleasure, they declare, doth lie in wishing for it, not in actually performing of it. I have known many ladies which have told me this. Yet can they never stop there; for if once they do begin wishing for it, without shadow of doubt they will some day come to the doing of it as well. For this is the law of love, that when once a woman doth wish or hope, or but dream of wishing and desiring a man for herself, the thing is done. If only the man know it, and steadily follow up his fair assailant, he will surely have leg or wing, fur or feathers, as they say.

In this wise then are poor husbands made cuckold by such thoughts on the part of ladies, who are ready to wish forsooth, but not to do. For truly, without suspecting it, they will of their own fault be burned in the candle, or at the fire they have themselves built. Like poor simple shepherdesses, which to warm themselves in the fields as they watch their sheep and lambs, do kindle a little fire, without thought of any harm or ill to follow. But they give no heed to the chance their little fire may set so great an one ablaze as will burn up a whole country-side of plains and woods.

'Twere well if such ladies would take example, to teach them wisdom, of the Comtesse d'Escaldasor, a very fair lady dwelling at Pavia, to whom M. de Lescu, afterward known as the Maréchal de Foix, was paying court. He was then a student at Pavia, and was called the Pro-

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tonotary de Foix, seeing he was destined for the Church, though afterward he did quit the long robe to adopt the profession of arms. And he might well love her, seeing at that day she bare the bell for beauty over all the ladies of Lombardy. So seeing herself hotly pressed by him, yet not wishing to rudely disoblige him or dismiss him roughly, for he was a near kinsman of the renowned Gaston de Foix, at whose fame all Italy trembled in those days, the Countess on a day of high festivity and state at Pavia, whereat all the fairest ladies of the city and neighbourhood were gathered and many noble gentlemen, did appear, the fairest of them all, superbly attired in a robe of sky blue, all trimmed and bespangled over all its length and breadth with torches and butterflies fluttering round them and burning themselves in their flame. The whole was in broidery of gold and silver, for truly the embroiderers of Milan have ever surpassed those of all the rest of the world, and won the lady the general repute of being the best adorned of all the company there present.

Then the Protonotary, leading her out to the dance, was moved to ask her what might be the meaning of the designs on her robe, strongly suspecting there lay beneath some hidden signification unfavourable to him. She made answer in these words, "Sir, I have had my robe fashioned thus, just as soldiers and horsemen do with their horses when they are wild and vicious, and kick and fling out their heels. For they do fix on their crupper a big silver bell, to the end that this signal may warn their comrades, when they are riding in a close press of company, to take heed of the vicious kicker, lest he do them an injury. In like wise by my fluttering butterflies, burning themselves in these torches, I do warn those honour-



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able gentlemen which do me the favour of loving me and admiring my beauty, not to come too nigh, nor to desire aught else, but only the sight of me. For they will gain nothing thereby, but only like the butterflies,—to long, and burn, and get no satisfaction.”

The story is writ in the *Emblems* of Paulus Jovius.<sup>1</sup> In this fashion did she warn her lover to take heed for himself in time. I know not whether or no he did come more nigh, or what he did. But later, being wounded to the death at the battle of Pavia, and taken prisoner, he begged to be carried to the house of this same Countess at Pavia, where he was very well received and tended by her. In three days’ time he died there, to the great sorrow of the lady, as I did hear the story told me by M. de Monluc, one time we were together in the trenches at Rochelle. It was night and we were talking together, when I related to him the tale of the robe and its device; on this he assured me he had seen the said Countess, who was very fair, and did love the Maréchal well, and how he had been most honourably entreated of her. For the rest he knew not if ever they had gone further at all. This example should be warning enough for many of the ladies the which I have spoken of above.

Then again, there be cuckolds which are so righteous they have their wives preached to and admonished by good and religious men, with a view to their conversion and reform. And these, with forced tears and words of pretended sorrow, do make many vows, promising mountains and marvels of repentance, and never, never to do the like again. But their oaths do scarce endure an instant, for truly the vows and tears of suchlike dames are of just so much weight as are the oaths and adjurations of lovers.

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So have I seen and known well a certain lady to the which a great Prince, her Sovereign, did offer the affront of commissioning appointing a Cordelier monk, as from himself and coming from the Court, to go find her husband, who was spending his vacation on his estate, to warn the same of his wife's reckless loves and the ill report current of the wrong she was doing him, and to say how, for the respect due to his position and office, he was sending him timely news thereof, to the end he might correct this sinful soul. The husband was greatly astounded and moved at such a message and kindly warning; yet did take no overt action, except only to thank his Prince and assure him he would see to the matter. Yet on his return he did make no difference for the worse in his treatment of his wife; for truly what would he have gained thereby? Once a woman hath taken to these courses, naught will alter her, like a posthorse which is grown so thoroughly used to go at the gallop that he can in no wise learn to go any other gait whatsoever.

Alas! how oft have we seen honourable ladies which, having been surprised at these tricks, and thereupon chid and beaten, yea! and admonished by every prayer and remonstrance not to return to the like course, do promise, protest and swear they will behave them chastely, yet do presently illustrate the proverb, *passato il periglio, gabbato il santo* (the danger past, the Saint is mocked), and return again with all the more zest to the game of love. Nay! many have we seen, which themselves feeling some worm of remorse gnawing their soul, have of their proper act made holy and right solemn vows of reformation, yet have never kept them, but presently have re-

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pented of their repentance, as M. du Bellay doth say of penitent courtesans:<sup>2</sup>

Mère d'amour, suivant mes premiers vœux,  
Dessous tes lois remettre je me veux,  
Dont je voudrois n'estre jamais sortie;  
Et me repens de m'estre repentie.

(Mother of love, returning to my earlier vows, I am fain to put me again beneath thy laws, which I would I had never deserted; lo! I repent me of my penitence.)

Such women declare 'tis exceeding hard to give up forever so sweet a habit and fond custom, seeing their time is so short in this brief sojourn they make in this world.

To confirm what I here say I would readily appeal to many a fair maid, which hath repented in youth and taken the veil and become a nun. If such were asked on her faith and conscience what she did really desire, many a time, I know, she would say, "Ah! would the high convent walls were broken down, that I might straight be free again!"

Wherefore husbands need never think to reduce their wives to order again, after once these have made the first breach in their honour, or that they can aught else but only give them the rein, merely recommending discretion and all possible avoidance of scandal. For truly we may apply all the remedies of love which ever Ovid taught, and an host of other subtle remedies that others have invented, yea! and those puissant ones of François Rabelais,<sup>3</sup> which he did teach to the venerable Panurge, yet will none of them all avail. But 'twere best of all to follow the advice given in the refrain of an old song of King Francis' time, which saith,

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Qui voudroit garder qu'une femme  
N'aille du tout à l'abandon,  
Il faudroit la fermer dans une pipe,  
Et en jouir par le bondon.

(If a man would make sure of his wife never going to the bad at all, he had best shut her up in a cask, and enjoy her through the bung-hole.)

In the reign of the late King Henri of France there was a certain jeweller which did import and expose for sale at the great Fair of St. Germain's a round dozen of a certain contrivance for confining women's affairs.<sup>4</sup> These were made of iron and were worn like a belt, joining underneath and locking with a key, and were so cunningly framed that the woman, once confined therein, could never find opportunity for the pleasures of love, there being only a few little tiny holes in the thing for *empissoyent* through.

'Tis said that five or six jealous husbands were found ready to buy one, wherewith they did confine their wives in such wise they might well say, "Good-bye, good times for ever and aye!" Yet was there one wife who be-thought her to apply to a locksmith very cunning in his art. So, when she had shown him the said contrivance, her husband being away in the country, he did so well use his ingenuity that he forged a false key therefor, so that the good lady could open and shut the thing at any time, whenever she would. The husband did never suspect or say a word, while the wife took her fill of the best of all pleasures, in spite of the jealous fool and silly cuckold her husband, who did imagine all the time he was living free of all apprehension of such a fate. But truly the

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naughty locksmith, which made the false key, quite spoiled his game; yea! and did even better, by what they say, for he was the first who tasted the dainty, and cuckolded him. Nor was this so extraordinary, for did not Venus, which was the fairest woman and harlot in all the world, mate with Vulcan, ironworker and locksmith, the which was exceeding mean-looking, foul, lame and hideous.

They say, moreover, that there were a number of gallant and honourable gentlemen of the Court which did threaten the jeweller that if ever again he should have aught to do with bringing such villainies with him, he would be killed. They bade him never come back again, and made him throw all the others that were left into the draught-house; and since then no more has been heard of such contrivances. And this was wisely done; for truly 'twas as good, or as bad, as destroying one half of mankind, so to hinder the engendering of posterity by dint of such confining, locking up and imprisoning of nature,—an abominable and hateful wrong to human productiveness.

Some there be which do give their wives into the hands of eunuchs to guard their honour, a thing which the Emperor Alexander Severus did strongly reprobate, harshly bidding them never have dealings with Roman ladies. But they were soon recalled again. Not indeed that these could ever beget children or the women conceive of them; yet can they afford some slight feeling and superficial taste of minor pleasures, giving some colourable imitation of the complete and perfect bliss. Of this many husbands do take very little account, declaring that their main grievance in the adultery of their wives had naught at all to do with what they got given them, but that it

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vexed them sore to have to rear and bring up and recognise as heirs children they had never begotten.

Indeed but for this, there is nothing they would have made less ado about. Thus have I known not a few husbands, who when they did find the lovers, who had made their wives children, to be easy and good-natured, and ready to give freely and keep them, took no more account of the thing at all, or even advised their wives to beg of them and crave some allowance to keep the little one they had had of them.

So have I heard tell of a great lady, which was the mother of Villeconnin, natural son of Francis I. The same did beseech the King to give or assign her some little property, before he died, for the child he had begot,—and this he did. He made over for this end two hundred thousand crowns in bank, which did profit him well and ran on ever growing, what with interest and re-investment, in such wise that it became a great sum and he did spend money with such magnificence and seemed in such good case and ample funds at Court that all were astonished thereat. And all thought he enjoyed the favours of some mysterious lady. None believed her his mother, but, seeing he never went about without her, it was universally supposed the great expenditure he made did come from his connexion with her. Yet it was not so at all, for she was really his mother; though few people were ware of it. Nor was anything known for sure of his lineage or birth, except that he eventually died at Constantinople, and that his inheritance as King's bastard was given to the Maréchal de Retz, who was keen and cunning enough to have discovered this little secret which he was able to turn to his profit, and did verify the bastardy

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which had been so long hid. Thus he did win the gift of this inheritance over the head of M. de Teligny, who had been constituted heir of the aforesaid Villeconnin.

Other folk, however, declared that the said lady had had the child by another than the King, and had so enriched him out of her own fortune. But M. de Retz did scrutinize and search among the banks so carefully that he did find the money and the original securities of King Francis. For all this some still held the child to have been the son of another Prince not so high as the King, or some one else of inferior rank, maintaining that for the purpose of covering up and concealing the whole thing and yet providing the child a maintenance, 'twas no bad device to lay it all to his Majesty's account, as indeed hath been done in other instances.

This much I do firmly believe, that there be many women in the world, nay! even in France, which if only they thought they could bring children into existence at this rate, would right readily suffer Kings and great Princes to mount on their bellies. But in very fact they oftentimes so mount without any grand regale following. Then are the poor ladies sore deceived and disappointed, for when they do consent to give themselves to suchlike great personages, 'tis only to have the *galardon* (*guerdon*, recompense), as folk say in Spanish.

Now as to such putative and doubtful children, a question doth arise open to much dispute, to wit whether they ought to succeed to their father's and mother's goods, some maintaining 'tis a great sin for women to make them so succeed. Some authorities have declared the woman should surely reveal the thing to the husband and tell him

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the whole truth, and this is the opinion held by the well-known "Subtle Doctor." Others on the contrary hold this opinion to be bad, because the woman would then be defaming herself by revealing it, and this she is in no wise bound to do; for good repute is a more precious possession than riches, saith Solomon.

'Tis better then for the goods to be taken, even unjustly, by the child than that the mother's good name be lost, for as a proverb hath it, "A good name is better than a golden girdle." Now the Theologians hold a maxim to the effect that when two opposite precepts and commands are binding on us, the less must give way to the greater. But the command to guard one's repute is greater and more stringent than that which orders to restore another's goods; and so must be preferred before it.

Nay! more, if the wife do reveal this to her husband, she doth thereby put herself in danger of being actually killed at his hands; but it is straitly forbid for any to compass their own death.

12.



**N**EITHER is it allowed a woman to kill herself for dread of being violated, or after being so; else would she be doing a mortal sin. Wherefore is it better for her to suffer herself to be ravished, if that she can in no wise by fight or crying out avoid the same, than to kill herself. For the violation of the body is not sin, except with the consent of the will. Hence the reply which Saint Lucy did make to the tyrant who threatened to have her taken to the brothel. "If



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you have me forced," she said, "why! my chastity will receive a double crown."

For this cause Lucretia hath been found to blame by some. True it is Saint Sabina and Saint Sophronia, along with other Christian virgins, who did take their own lives rather than fall into the hands of barbarians, are excused by our doctors and fathers of the Church, which say they did so by special prompting of the Holy Spirit. By this same prompting, after the taking of Cyprus, a certain Cypriote damsel, lately made Christian, seeing herself being carried off as a slave with many another lady of her sort, to be the prey of Turks, did secretly fire the powder magazine in the galley, so that in an instant all was burned up and consumed along with her, saying, "So please God, our bodies will never be polluted and ravished by these foul Turks and Saracens!" Or 'tis possible, God knows, it had already been polluted and she was fain to do penance therefor,—unless indeed the fact was her master had refrained from touching her, to the end he might make more money by selling her a maid, seeing men are desirous in those lands, as indeed in all other lands, to taste a fresh and untainted morsel.

However, to return to the noble custodians of these poor women,—the eunuchs. These, as I have said, are not utterly unable to do adultery with them and make their husbands cuckold, excepting always the engendering of children.

I knew two women in France which did deliberately set their love on two gentlemen who were castrate, to the end they might not become with child; yet did they find pleasure therein, and free from all fear of scandal. But there have been husbands in Turkey and Barbary so jealous,

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that having discovered this deceit, they have determined to castrate their wretched slaves altogether and entirely, and cut the whole concern clean off. Now, by what those say who have had experience of Turkey, not two out of the dozen escape of those on whom they do practise this cruelty, and do not die therefrom. Them that do survive, they do cherish and make much of, as true, certain and chaste guardians of their wives' chastity and sure guarantors of their honour.

We Christians on our part do not practise suchlike abominable and too utterly horrible cruelties; but instead of these castrated slaves, we give our women old men of sixty for guardians. This for instance is done in Spain, even at the Court of the Queens of that country, where I have seen them as custodians of the maids of honour and Court ladies. Yet, God knows, there be old men more dangerous for ruining maids and wives than any young ones, and an hundred times more hot, ingenious and persevering to gain over and corrupt the same.

I do not believe such men, for all they be hoary headed and white bearded, are more sure guardians at all than younger men, nor old women neither. Thus an aged Spanish duenna once, taking out her maids and passing by a great hall and seeing men's members painted up on the wall in lifelike portrayal, only exaggerated and out of all proportion, did remark, *Mira que tan bravos no los pintan estos hombres, como quien no los conociese* (Look how brave men those be, and how ill they have painted them, like one who has never seen the things). Then all her maids did turn toward her, and noted what she said, except one, of my acquaintance, who acting the *ingénue*, did ask one of her companions what birds those were;

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for some of them were depicted with wings. And the other made answer, they were birds of Barbary, more beautiful in reality than even as depicted. God only knows if she had ever seen any such; but she had to make what pretence she could.

Many husbands are sore deceived, and often, in their duennas. For they think, provided only their women-kind are in the charge of some old woman, whom both parties do call mother as a title of respect, that they must needs be well safeguarded in front. Yet none are more easy than such guardians to be bribed and won over; for being as they are, avaricious of their very nature, they are ready to take gold from any quarter to sell their prisoners.

Others again cannot be forever on the watch over their young charges, who themselves are always wide awake and on the alert, especially when they be in love; for truly most of their time the old dames will be asleep in the chimney-corner, while before their very face the husbands will be a-cuckolding, without their heeding or knowing aught about it.

I knew once a lady which did it before her duenna's very eyes, in such cunning wise she never perceived anything wrong. Another did the like in her own husband's presence and all but under his eyes, the while he was playing at primero.

Then other aged dames will be feeble of foot, and cannot follow up their ladies at a round pace, so that by the time they do reach the extremity of a walk or a wood or a room, the young ones have whipped their little present into their pocket, without the old duenna having observed what was a-doing, or seen aught whatever, being slow

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of foot and dim of sight. Again there be yet other dames of the sort which, themselves having plied the trade of old, do think it pity to see the young fast, and are so good-natured to them, they will of their own accord open the way for their charges, yea! and provoke them to follow in the same, and help them all they can. Thus Aretino saith how the greatest of pleasures for a woman that hath travelled that road, and her highest satisfaction, is ever to make another do likewise.

And this is why, when a man doth crave the aid of a good minister for his amours, he will alway apply and address himself to an old procuress rather than to a young woman. So I do remember a certain very gallant gentleman, which did mislike sorely, and did forbid it expressly, that his wife should ever frequent the company of old women, as being much too dangerous society,—but with younger women she might go as much as she pleased. And for this course he would adduce many excellent reasons, the which I will leave to men of apter discourse than I to detail in full.

And this is why a certain Lord of the great world I know of did entrust his wife, of whom he was very jealous, to a lady, a cousin of his own, but unmarried, to be her *surveillante*. This office she did zealously perform, albeit for her own part she did copy the half only of the character of the gardener's dog, seeing he doth never eat the cabbage out of his master's garden, nor yet will suffer other to do so; but this lady would eat readily enough, but would never suffer her cousin. Yet was the other forever filching some dainty bit, without her noting it, cunning as she was,—or mayhap she did but make pretence not to see.

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I could right easily adduce an host of devices which poor jealous cuckolds do employ to confine, constrain, curb and keep in their wives, that they kick not over the traces. But it is of mighty little use for them either to try these ancient means they have heard tell of, or to invent new ones; they but lose their labour. For once women have gotten this naughty worm of love in their heads, they will ever be sending their poor husbands to keep house with Guillot the Pensive. And hereof do I hope to discourse further in a chapter I have already half writ, on the ruses and stratagems of women in this matter, the which I do compare with the ambuscades and stratagems of soldiers in war. But the finest device of all, the most sure and eke the kindest preventive a jealous husband can apply to his wife, is ever to let her go her way in full liberty, as I have heard a very gallant married man declare, for that it is the woman's nature the more she is forbid a thing, so much the more to long for the same; and this is especially true in love, where the appetite doth grow far hotter by forbidding than by letting things take their course.

Then is there another sort of cuckolds, as to whom doth arise the following question, to wit,—whether if a man hath had full enjoyment of a woman during the lifetime of her cuckold husband, and this latter die, and the lover do afterward marry the widow in second nuptials, he ought to wear the name and title of cuckold,—a case I have heard debated in regard to several, and these great men.

Some there be do say he cannot be cuckold, because it is himself did have the doing of it, and no one else did make him so but only himself, and the horns were made by him

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and no other. Yet are there many armourors that do make swords whereby themselves are killed, or do kill each other.

Others again say he is really cuckold, but only *in embryo*. For this they do allege many reasons, but seeing the process is yet undecided, I leave it to be pleaded before the first audience that will listen to the case.

The same may be said concerning a very great lady, and a married one, which did break her marriage vow fourteen years ago with the lover who doth keep to her still, and since that day hath been ever awaiting and longing for her husband's death. But the devil is in it if he hath ever yet contrived to die to meet her wishes! So that she might well say, "Cursed be the husband and mate, which hath lived longer than I desired!" Sickneses and calamities of body he hath had galore, but never fatal. In fact our King, the last Henri, having bestowed the inheritance in the fine and rich estate the said cuckold husband had of him on a very honourable and brave gentleman, would oftentimes say, "Two persons there be at my Court which are thinking it long till so and so die, one for his estate's sake and the other to wed her lover. But both one and the other have been sore deluded up to now."

See how wise and foreseeing God is, not to send folk what they wish, when it is evil. However, I have been told that for some while past this pair are in ill accord, and have now burned their promise of future marriage and broke the agreement,—to the huge despite of the lady and joy of the prospective husband, seeing he did in no wise desire to go on longer and wait forever for the death of the other. This last was alway making a mock of folk, continually giving alarms, as that he was just

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about to die; yet in the end he hath survived his would-be supplanter. An instance surely of God's punishment, for a marriage so made is a thing all but unheard of; and indeed 'tis a great sin, and an odious, to contract and agree upon a second marriage, the first being still existent in its entirety.

I had rather have one, also a great lady, albeit not so great as the other I have just spoke of, who being sought of a nobleman in marriage, did wed him, not for the love she bare him, but because she saw him sickly, thin and worn, and in constant ill-health, and as the doctors told her he would not outlive the year, even after having known this fair lady several times abed. Wherefore she did expect his death very soon, and did make all dispositions after his demise as to his goods and property, fine plenishing and great wealth, which he did bring her by marriage; for he was a nobleman of much riches and very well-to-do. But she was finely cheated; for he liveth still a sturdy wight, and in better fettle an hundred times than before he married her; since then the lady herself is dead. They say the aforesaid nobleman was used to feign to be sickly and ailing to the end that, knowing as he did the lady to be exceeding avaricious, she might wed him in the hope of getting so rich an inheritance. Yet did God above dispose it all quite contrariwise, and made the she-goat feed where she had been tied, in spite of herself.

Now what shall we say of such men as do wed with harlots and courtesans, that are very famous, as is commonly done in France, but still more in Spain and Italy, where men are persuaded they are winning God's mercy for good deeds, *por librar un' anima christiana del in-*

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*ferno*,—"for delivering a Christian soul from hell," as they say, and setting it in the right way.

I have undoubtedly seen some men maintain this opinion and doctrine, that if they did marry them for this good and religious object, they ought in no wise to be ranked as cuckolds. For surely what is done for the honour of God should not be made a matter of shame. This, of course, provided that their wives, once started afresh in the right way, do not leave it again and return to the other. So have I seen some of these women in the two countries named which did sin no more after being married, but others that could never reform, and went back to trip and stumble in the old ditch.

The first time ever I was in Italy, I fell in love with a very beautiful courtesan of Rome, who was called Faustina. But seeing I had no great wealth, and she was of a very high price, from ten to twelve crowns a night, I was constrained to content me with words and looks only. After some time I paid a second visit to the same city, and being now better furnished with money, I went to visit her at her lodging by the introduction of another lady, and did find her married to a man of the law, though still established in her old quarters. She did welcome me affectionately, and recounted me the good fortune of her marriage, repudiating altogether the follies of her previous life, to the which she had said farewell forever. I did then show her an handful of good French crowns, for indeed I was dying of love for her worse than ever. She was tempted at the sight and did grant me that I longed for, saying how in concluding marriage, she had claimed and agreed with her husband for her entire liberty,—without scandal, however, or concealment, and only at the



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price of a large sum,—to the end the pair of them might live in affluence. She was therefore to be had only by wealthy men; and to them he would yield very willingly, but not to petty customers at all. Truly here was a husband cuckold out and out, in bud and blossom too.

I have heard speak of a lady of the great world who, in concluding marriage, did desire and stipulate that her husband should leave her at Court to follow the pursuit of love, reserving herself alway the use of her forest of dead-wood or common faggot at her own good pleasure. However, in return, she was to give him every month a thousand francs for his little indulgences of every day. In fact the one thought was to have a merry life of it.

Thus it is, such women as have been free, cannot easily refrain, but will e'en burst the strait bars of the doors imprisoning them, however strong these be and well guarded, wherever gold doth clink and glitter. Witness the beauteous daughter of King Acrisius (*Danaë*), who all confined and imprisoned in her great tower as she was, yet did feel the persuasive drops of Jupiter's fair rain of gold, and admit the same.

Ah! how hard it is, a gallant gentleman of my acquaintance used to say, to safeguard a woman which is fair, ambitious, greedy and covetous of being bravely attired, and richly dressed, gaily decked out and well appointed, so that she lay not *cul en terre*,—no matter how well armed, as they say, her fort be, and however brave and valiant a man her husband be, and albeit he doth carry a good sword to defend her withal.

I have known so many of these same brave and valiant folk which have all gone this road. And truly 'tis great pity to see these honourable and brave men come to this,

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and that, after so many gallant victories won by them, so many notable conquests over their enemies and noble combats decided by their valour, they should yet be forced to carry horns intermingled among the fair flowers and leaves of the crowns of triumph they wear,—horns which do altogether spoil the effect thereof. Yet do they think far more of their high ambitions and noble combats, their honourable emprises and valiant exploits, than of safeguarding their wives and throwing light on their dark places. And this is how, without more ado, they do come to the city of Cuckoldland and the conquest of the same. Yet is it a sore pity. For instance, I once knew a very brave and valiant gentleman, bearing a very high name and title, who was one day proudly telling over his valiant deeds and conquests, when a very honourable and noble gentleman, his comrade and friend, who was present, did say, “Yes! there he is telling us of all his wonderful conquests; but truly to master his own wife’s affair is the greatest of all he hath ever won, or ever will!”

Many others have I known, who no matter what grace, majesty and proud carriage they might show, yet did every one display that look of the cuckold which doth spoil all the rest. For truly this look and defect cannot ever be hid or dissembled; no confidence of bearing and gesture whatsoever can hinder its being known and evidently noted. And for myself, never have I seen any one of these folk in all my life but did have their own distinctive marks, gestures, postures, looks and defects,—excepting only one I knew once, in whom the most keensighted could have found naught to observe or take hold of, without knowing his wife as well; such an easy grace,

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pleasant manners, and honourable, dignified deportment were his.

I would earnestly beg ladies which have husbands so perfect not to play them such tricks and put such affronts on them. But then they might in their turn retort upon me, "Nay! tell us where are to be found these perfect husbands, such as was the man whose example you have just quoted to us?"

Verily, ladies, you are right; for that all men cannot be Scipios and Cæsars. I hold, therefore, that herein ye must e'en follow your fancies. For indeed, speaking of the Cæsars, the most gallant of mankind have all gone this road, and the most virtuous and perfect, as I have said above and as we do read of that enlightened Emperor Trajan,<sup>2</sup> whose perfections, however, could not hinder his wife Plotina from yielding herself up entirely to the good pleasure of Hadrian, which was Emperor afterward. From her did this last win great advantages, profits and aggrandisement, so much so that she was the chief cause of his advancement. Nor was he in any wise ungrateful, after he had come to greatness, for he did love her and ever honour her right well. And after her death he did make such mourning and felt such sadness that at the last he did altogether lose all wish to eat and drink for a while, and was forced to tarry in Narbonese Gaul, where he had heard the sad tidings, three or four months, during which time he writ to the Senate ordering them to stablish Plotina in the number of the Goddesses, and did command that at her funeral sacrifices, exceeding rich and sumptuous, should be offered. Meantime he did employ his leisure in building and raising up, to her honour and memory, a very beautiful temple near

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Nemausus, now called Nimes, adorned with most fair and rich marbles and porphyries, with other gawds.

See then how in matters of love and its satisfaction, naught at all can be laid down for certain. For truly Cupid the God thereof is blind, as doth clearly appear in sundry women, which having husbands as handsome and honourable and accomplished as can anywhere be seen, yet do fall in love with other men as ill-favoured and foul as mortals may be.

I have seen many cases that did force one to ask this question: Which is the more whorish dame, she that hath a right handsome and honourable husband, yet taketh an ill-favoured lover, one that is evil-tempered and quite unlike her husband; or she which hath an ill-favoured and ill-conditioned husband, and doth take a handsome, agreeable lover, and yet ceaseth not to love and fondly caress her husband, as if he were the prince of men for beauty,—as myself have seen many a woman do?

Of a surety the common voice doth declare that she which, having an handsome husband, yet doth leave the same to love an ill-favoured lover is a very great whore,—just as a person is surely a foul glutton which doth quit good food to eat of bad. So when a woman doth quit an handsome piece to take up with an ill-favoured, it hath all the semblance of her doing this out of sheer lecherousness, seeing there is naught more licentious and more fitted to satisfy licentiousness than an ugly man, with a savour more after the fashion of a stinking, filthy and lascivious goat than of a proper man. And in very deed handsome and honourable men are something more delicate and less apt to satiate an excessive and unbridled

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wantonness than is a coarse, bearded, lewd fellow, some big ramping countrified satyr.

Others maintain that the woman which doth love a handsome lover and an ill-favoured husband, and doth caress them both, is at the least as great a whore as the other, for that she is fain to lose naught whatever of her ordinary diet and sustenance.

Such women are like them that travel in foreign lands, yea! and in France to boot, which being arrived at night at the inn to supper, do never forget to claim of mine host the wheeler's measure. Yea! and the fellow must needs have it too, albeit he should be full of good liquor to the throat already.

So will these dames, when night comes, never be without their "wheeler's measure,"—as was the way with one I knew well, who yet had a husband that was a right good performer. Natheless are they fain to increase and redouble their pleasure by any means they may, liking to have the lover for the day, which doth show up his beauty and so make the lady more eager for the fray, and give her more delight and satisfaction by reason of the good daylight. But the worthy husband with his ill-favoured face is kept for nighttime; for truly, as they say all cats are grey at night, and provided the lady have satisfaction of her appetites, she recks naught whether her mate is ill or well favoured.

Indeed, as I learn from sundry, when one is in these ecstasies of amorous pleasure, neither man nor woman reckon aught of any other thing or thought whatever, but only what they are at for the instant; albeit on the other hand I have it on good authority how many dames have persuaded their lovers that, when they were at it with their

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husbands, they would ever give their thoughts to their lovers, and not reck at all of their husbands, in order to get the greater pleasure therefrom. So likewise have I heard husbands declare that when with their wives, they would be alway thinking of their mistresses with the like object. But these be disagreeable subjects!

Natural philosophers have told me that none but the present object of passion can possibly dominate them at this crisis, and in no wise the absent; and give many reasons for their opinion. However I am not philosopher enough nor sufficiently learned to contradict them; and besides sundry of their reasons are filthy ones, and I would fain ever preserve decency. But for these predilections for all-favoured loves, I have seen many such in my day that have astonished me an hundred times over.

Returning once from a journey in a foreign land,—I will not give the name, for fear men should recognise whereof I speak,—and discoursing with a noble lady of the great world, I chanced to speak of another great lady and Princess, the which I had seen in those parts; whereupon she did ask me as to this latter's love affairs. So I told her the name of the personage whom she held favourite, one that was neither handsome nor of graceful presence, and of very low degree. Her reply was, "Verily she doth herself great wrong, and eke plays love a sorry trick, seeing she is so fair and honourable a lady, as all men hold."

And the said lady was surely right in the language she held, for that herself did act accordingly, and gainsaid not her opinions. For she had a worthy and honourable lover, whom she cherished right well. And when all is said, a fair lady will be doing no harm in loving, if only

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she will choose a worthy object of her love, nor wronging her husband neither,—if for no other reason, at least for the sake of their descendants. This, seeing there be husbands that are so ill-favoured, so stupid, senseless and silly, so graceless and cowardly, so poor spirited and good for naught, that their wives, having children of them and like them, might as well have none at all. And indeed myself have known many ladies, which have borne children to suchlike husbands, and these have been all of them just like their fathers; yet afterward, when they have e'en borrowed one or two from their lovers, these have surpassed their supposed fathers, their brothers and sisters in all things whatsoever.

Some, moreover, among philosophers which have treated of this matter, have always maintained how that children thus borrowed by stealth, or stolen, if you will, thus engendered under the rose, and on the spur of the moment, are ever far more gallant, and recall more the merry fashion wherein they are used to be created, nimbly and cleverly, than such as are begot in bed, heavily, dully, ponderously, at leisure, their parents more than half asleep the while, giving never a thought but of brutish satisfaction to the pleasure in hand.

In like wise have I heard them that have charge of the stud-farms of kings and great lords say how they have many a time seen better foals got stealthily by their dams than others bred with every precaution by the masters of the stud, and from stallions specially chosen and assigned thereto. And so it is with human beings.

How many cases have I seen where ladies have borne handsomer and braver and more excellent children than they would have done, if the putative fathers had really

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begotten them,—mere calves and brute beasts as they would then have been.

A good reason why women are well advised to seek the help and commodity of good and handsome stallions, to the end they may produce good offspring. Yet I have seen on the other hand some which had handsome husbands, but did nevertheless call in the aid of ill-favoured lovers and base stallions, which did beget ugly and evil-conditioned descendants.

This indeed is one of the most signal commodities and incommunities of the state of cuckoldry.

I once knew a great lady of society which had an exceeding ill-favoured and ill-bred husband; and of four girls and two boys she had, there were only two good for aught, being children of her lover, while the others, coming of her scrub of a husband,—I had all but said her screech-owl of a husband, for truly he had all the look of one,—were but poor misbegotten creatures.

Now herein doth it behoove ladies to be very well advised and cunning withal, for as a rule children do resemble their fathers, and whenas they do not so, bring grave suspicion on their mothers' honour. So have I seen in my life many fair ladies possessed of this craze, to have it said and thought of all the world that their children do altogether resemble their father and not themselves, though really they are not the least like them. For to say so is the greatest pleasure one can do them, seeing there is then presumption they have not borrowed them from any other, however opposite the truth may really be.

One time I was present at a great assemblage of the Court, whereat folk were discussing the portraits of two daughters of a certain very great Queen. Each stated



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his opinion as to whom they did resemble, in such wise that all, men and women, declared they took altogether after the mother. But I, being a most humble servant and admirer of the mother, did hold the other side, and maintained stoutly they took entirely after the father, and that if only they had known and seen the same as intimately as I had, they would grant me it was so. Whereupon the Queen's sister did thank me for my words, and was exceeding grateful to me, seeing there were sundry persons, which did say what they did, of set purpose, to raise suspicion of her going astray in love,—the more that there *was* something of dust in her flute, as the saying is. Thus did my judgement as to the children's likeness to their father put all right again. Wherefore in this matter, whosoever shall love a lady and shall be looking upon children of her blood and bone, let him alway declare these do take after the father altogether, whether it be so or no.

True they will do no hurt, if they maintain the children take a little after the mother, as was said by a gentleman of the Court, a chief friend of mine, speaking in company of two gentlemen, brothers and high favourites with the King. Being asked which they were like, the father or mother, he did make answer that the one which was cold was like the father, and the other, which was hot, the mother. By this quip giving a pretty stroke at the mother, who was of a somewhat hot complexion. And as a matter of fact these two children did partake of these two several humours, the hot and the cold.

There is yet another sort of cuckolds, they which are made such by reason of the scorn they show their wives. Thus I have known several who, though having fair and

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honourable dames to wife, did take no account of them, but would ever scorn and disdain them. These being sharp of wit and full of spirit, and of good family to boot, seeing themselves so disdained, did proceed to pay them back in their own coin. Quick was there fine love making, and quick the accomplishment of the same; for as saith the Italian and Neapolitan catch, *amor non si vince con altro che con sdegno*—"love si mastered by scorn, and scorn only."

For so a fair and honourable lady, and one that doth know herself such and taketh pride therein, seeing her husband treating her with mere disdain, though she should bear him the fondest wifely love in the world, and albeit they should preach and put before her all the commands of the law to love and honour him, yet if she have the least spark of spirit, will she leave him in the lurch and take a lover elsewhere to help her in her little needs, and choose her out some private pleasure of her own.

I knew once two ladies of the Court, that were sisters-in-law. Of these the one had married an husband which was high in favour, a courtier and an adroit one. Yet did he not make such account of his wife as it behooved, seeing the birth she was of, but would speak to her before company as she were a mere savage, and treat her very roughly. This behaviour she did endure patiently for a while, till at length the husband did fall something out of favour. Then noting her opportunity and taking it cleverly as it came, having indeed waited for a good one, she straightway paid him back the scorn he had put on her, lightly and gaily making the poor man cuckold. And her sister did likewise, following her example. This last had been wed when very young and of tender years, so

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that her husband took no great heed of her, deeming her a mere chit and child, and did not love her as he should. But she coming to a ripper time of life, and finding out she had a heart and was fair to look on, did soon pay him back in his own coin, and so made him a present of a fine pair of horns by way of interest on his past neglect.

Another time I knew a great Lord, which having taken two courtesans into favour, whereof one was a Moorish woman, to be his delight and joy of heart, did make no account of his wife, albeit she did seek to him with all due respect, and all the wifely love and reverence ever she could. Yet could he never look upon her with a favourable eye, or cherish her with a good grace, and of an hundred nights he would hardly bestow twain on her. What must she do then, the poor girl, after so many indignities, but what she did,—choose another vacant bed, and couple with another better half, and so take that she was fain of?

At least she had been justified, if the husband had been like another I know of, who was of a like humour, and being pressed by his wife, a very fair lady and one that did take her joy elsewhere than at home, did tell her frankly: "Well! well! take your pleasures abroad; I give you full leave. Do on your part what you please with another; I leave you in perfect liberty. Only make no trouble about my amours, and suffer me to do as I like. I will never hinder your pleasures and satisfaction; so do not you hinder mine." So, each independent of the other, the twain did go forth on their merry way, one to right, the other to left, without a thought or care for one another; a good and happy life truly!

No less should I commend a certain old man I knew

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once, who being impotent, sickly and gouty, did say thus one fine day to his wife, who was very fair, seeing clearly he could not satisfy her as she was fain to be dealt with: "I know right well, my pretty, how that my impotence accords ill with your heartsome years. This may well make me odious to you, and render it impossible to you to be my loving wife, as if I could to you the regular offices a strong, robust husband should. So I have thought good to suffer you and grant you full freedom to love some other, and borrow one that may satisfy you better than I can. But above all, I pray you choose out one that is discreet and modest, and will in no wise bring scandal on you, nor on me neither. And may he make you a pair of fine lads, the which I will love and rear as my own, in such wise that all men shall think them our own true and lawful offspring. And this is the more possible, seeing I have still in me some show of vigour and strength, and appearance enough of bodily manhood to make folk suppose them mine."

I leave you to suppose whether the fair girl was glad to receive this agreeable little homily, and free leave to enjoy such pleasing liberty. This she did turn to such good account that in a twinkling she did people the house with two or three fine infants, wherein the husband, inasmuch as he did touch her at times and sleep with her, might deem he had some share, and did actually think so, and the neighbours and every one. In such wise were both husband and wife well pleased, and had good progeny, to boot.

Here again is another sort of cuckolds, they which are made so by reason of an amiable opinion certain women hold, to wit that there is no thing nobler and more lawful

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and more commendable than Charity. And by Charity they say they mean not merely giving to the poor who have need of succour and assistance from the wealth and abundance of the rich, but likewise helping to assuage the flames of poor languishing lovers that one sees consuming with the fire of an ardent passion. "For of a truth," they declare, "what can be more charitable than to restore life to one we see dying, and to quite refresh again the man thus consuming away?" So says that brave Paladin, the Seigneur de Montauban, upholding the fair Genevra in Ariosto, who doth maintain that of rights the woman should die, which robs her lover of life, and not she who gives it him.

This did he say of a maid, and if it be true of a maid, then much more are suchlike deeds of Charity commendable in wives even more than in maids, seeing these have not their purses untied and open yet like married women,—the which, or at any rate some among them, have these same exceeding ample and well adapted to enlarge their charities!

Which doth remind me of a tale of a very fair lady of the Court, who did attire herself for a Candlemas-tide all in a dress of white damask, with all else white to match, so that naught that day did look fairer or more white. Then did the lady's lover win over one of her companions, which likewise was a very fair lady, but somewhat older and better skilled in speech, and well fitted to intercede for him. So, whenas they all three were looking at a very fine picture, wherein was depicted Charity clad all in white with a white veil, this last did say to her friend: "You do wear this day the same dress as Charity here; but seeing you do resemble her in attire, you should be like

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her too as concerneth your lover, there being no other thing more commendable than good pity and sweet charity, in whatsoever way it be showed forth, provided always it be with good will to help one's neighbour. Therefore be charitable; but if you have the fear of your husband and the sanctity of wedlock before your eyes, why! 'tis a vain superstition we women should never entertain, seeing how nature hath given us good things in divers sorts, not to use the same niggardly, like some vile miserly hag with her treasure hoard, but rather to distribute them generously to poor suffering mortals and men in dire straits. True it is our chastity doth resemble a treasure, which it behooves us be niggard of on base occasions; but for high and noble ones, we should dispense thereof liberally and without stint. In like wise ought we to deal with our chastity, the which we must yield up generously to folk of merit and desert, and ill-fortune to boot, but refuse to such as be vile, worthless, and such as do not stand in need. As for our husbands, truly these be fine idols, for us never to pay our vows and candles to any but them only, and never to visit other handsome images! For 'tis to God alone we do owe absolute and unbroken allegiance, and to no man."

Now this discourse was in no wise displeasing to the lady, and did much advantage the lover, who by help of a little perseverance, did presently reap the benefit thereof. Yet are Charity sermons of the sort right dangerous for the unhappy husbands. I have heard tell (I know not whether it be true, so I will not say for certain it is so), how at the beginning when the Huguenots did first establish their religion, and they would be holding their preachings at night and in secret places, for fear

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of being surprised, sought out and punished, whenas one day they were thus in the Rue St. Jacques at Paris, in the days of King Henri II., certain great ladies resorting thither to receive this Charity, were all but caught in the act. After the Minister had done his sermon, at the end thereof he did recommend them to be charitable; whereupon without more ado they did extinguish the lights, and on the spot each man and woman did exercise the same towards his or her brother or sister in Christ, dispensing it one to the other according to the good will and ability of each. But this I dare not assert right out, though I have been assured 'tis a true thing. Yet on the contrary 'tis very possible the whole is a mere lie and imposture.

At any rate I know this much well, how at Poitiers there dwelt at that time a certain advocate's wife, known by the name of the fair Gotterelle, whom myself have seen, which was one of the most beautiful women of her day, of the most charming grace and shape, and one of the most desirable dames in all the town at that time. Wherefore was every man fain to be making eyes at the same, and laying of his heart at her feet. She was one day at the end of sermon time handled by a round dozen of student lads, one after the other, whether in the Consistory or under some pent-house, or as I have heard some say, under a gallows in the Old Market,—at any rate without her having made one single outcry or refusal. Rather, asking only the text of the sermon for password, she did welcome them one after other right courteously, as her true brothers in Christ. This gentle alms-giving she did long continue afterward towards them, yet would she never bestow one farthing's worth on any Papist.

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Yet were there sundry of that faith which, borrowing of the Huguenot comrades the word and the jargon of their meeting-house, did enjoy her favours. Others again would resort to the sermonizing expressly for this cause, and pretend to be converted, to learn the secret and so have pleasure of this beauteous dame. I was then at Poitiers as a student lad, and several good comrades of mine, who had their share of her favour, did assure me of the fact, and swear to it; moreover the general bruit in the place did confirm the same. Verily a delectable and charitable deed to do, and a right conscientious lady thus to make choice and preference of her fellow religionists!

Yet another form of Charity is there, which is oft times practised towards poor prisoners who are shut up in dungeons and robbed of all enjoyments with women. On such do the gaolers' wives and women that have charge over them, or châtelaines who have prisoners of war in their Castle, take pity and give them share of their love out of very charity and mercifulness. Thus did a certain Roman courtesan say once to her daughter, of whom a gallant was deeply enamoured, but she would never bestow on him so much as a farthing's worth: *E dagli, al manco por misericordia*,—"Well, well! do him charity then for pity's sake."

Thus do these gaolers' wives, noble châtelaines and others, treat their prisoners, the which, captive and unhappy though they be, yet cease not for that to feel the prickings of the flesh, as much as ever they did in their best days. As saith the old proverb, "Longing cometh of lacking," so even in the straw and on the hard ground,



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my lord Priapus will still be lifting his head, as well as on the best and softest bed in all the world.

Hence it cometh that beggars and prisoners, in their lazar-houses and prisons, are just as wanton as Kings, Princes and great folk in their rich Palaces and on their royal and dainty couches.

To confirm what I say, I will instance a tale that Captain Beaulieu, Captain of the King's Galleys, of whom I have before spoke once and again, did tell me. He was in the service of the late Grand Prior of France, a member of the house of Lorraine, who was much attached to him. Going one time to take his patron on board at Malta in a frigate, he was taken by the Sicilian galleys, and carried prisoner to the Castel-à-mare at Palermo, where he was shut up in an exceeding narrow, dark and wretched dungeon, and very ill entreated by the space of three months. By good hap the Governor of the Castle, who was a Spaniard, had two very fair daughters, who hearing him complaining and making moan, did one day ask leave of their father to visit him, for the honour of the good God; and this he did freely give them permission to do. And seeing the Captain was of a surety a right gallant gentleman, and as ready-tongued as most, he was able so to win them over at this, the very first visit, that they did gain their father's leave for him to quit his wretched dungeon and to be put in a seemly enough chamber and receive better treatment. Nor was this all, for they did crave and get permission to come and see him freely every day and converse with him.

And this did fall out so well that presently both the twain of them were in love with him, albeit he was not

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handsome to look upon, and they very fair ladies. And so, without a thought of the chance of more rigorous imprisonment or even death, but rather tempted by such opportunities, he did set himself to the enjoyment of the two girls with good will and hearty appetite. And these pleasures did continue without any scandal, for so fortunate was he in this conquest of his for the space of eight whole months, that no scandal did ever hap all that time, and no ill, inconvenience, nor any surprise or discovery at all. For indeed the two sisters had so good an understanding between them and did so generously lend a hand to each other and so obligingly play sentinel to one another, that no ill hap did ever occur. And he sware to me, being my very intimate friend as he was, that never in his days of greatest liberty had he enjoyed so excellent entertainment or felt keener ardour or better appetite for it than in the said prison,—which truly was a right good prison for him, albeit folk say no prison can be good. And this happy time did continue for the space of eight months, till the truce was made betwixt the Emperor and Henri II., King of France, whereby all prisoners did leave their dungeons and were released. He sware that never was he more grieved than at quitting this good prison of his, but was exceeding sorry to leave these fair maids, with whom he was in such high favour, and who did express all possible regrets at his departing.

I did ask him if ever he apprehended ill consequences, if he were discovered. To which he made reply, he most certainly did, yet was not afeared thereof. For at the worst they would but have put him to death, and he had rather have died than go back to his first dungeon. Moreover he was afraid, if he had failed to gratify these

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honourable maids, seeing they sought to him so eagerly, that they would have conceived so sore a despise and disdain against him, that he would have gotten some worse treatment even than afore. Wherefore, close shutting his eyes to all consequences, he did adventure boldly on this merry emprise.

Many another adventure of the sort is related in our land of France, as of the Duc d'Arschot, who when a prisoner in the Bois de Vincennes, did escape by the help of an honourable lady; the which lady however was like to have suffered sore for it, seeing 'twas a matter of the King's service. And indeed suchlike deeds of charity are blameworthy, if they do touch the general weal, though very good and commendable, when only the individual is concerned, and the lover's life and his mistress's only endangered. In this there is scant hurt.

I could instance many fine examples pertinent to this matter, if I were desirous of writing a separate discourse thereon,—and insooth 'twould be by no means an unamusing subject. However I will but quote the following one, and no other beside, for the sake of telling a pleasant and classic tale.

We read in Livy how, after the Romans had utterly destroyed the town of Capua, certain inhabitants of that city did come to Rome to represent their unhappy state to the Senate, and beseech the Fathers to have pity on them. The matter was debated and amongst others which did pronounce an opinion was M. Atilius Regulus, who did maintain they should show no mercy whatever. "For he could in no wise discover," he declared, "any single Capuan, since the revolting of their city, who could be said to have displayed the least atom of friendliness

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lants, that did well deserve all their charity, and so could they do no otherwise than grant them full enjoyment of their good favours.

Thus, in whatsoever way it came about, did these honourable ladies well earn the courtesy which the Roman Commonwealth showed them, making them to recover all their goods, and assuring them the peaceable enjoyment of the same for all time. Nay! more, they did make known to them how they might ask what they would, and they should have their request. And to speak candidly, if Titus Livy had not been so reticent and unduly constrained by shamefacedness and overmodesty, he might very well have spoke right out about these ladies, and said plainly they did not grudge the favour of their fair bodies. So would this passage of History have been yet more excellent and entertaining to peruse, had he not thus docked his narrative, and left sticking at his pen-point the best part of the tale. Such was the discourse we three did hold thereon at the time.

13.



ING JOHN of France,<sup>1</sup> when a prisoner in England, did in like-wise receive many marks of favour from the Countess of Salisbury, and such pleasant ones that, not being able to forget the same and the titbits she bestowed on him, he did return once more to see her again, as she had made him swear and promise he would do.

Other ladies there be which are complaisant herein up to a certain point of conscience and charity. Of this sort was one which would never suffer her lover, sleep

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with her as oft as he might, to kiss her the least in the world on the lips, giving as her reason that 'twas her mouth had made the oath of faith and fealty to her husband, and she would fain not foul the same by way of the very mouth that hade made and taken it. But as for that of the body, the which had said never a word and promised naught, this she did let him do with at his good pleasure, and made no scruple to yield to her lover, seeing it is not in the competence of the upper part to pledge itself for the lower, any more than for the lower for the upper. For that the custom of Law doth say that none can bind himself for another without the consent and word of either party, nor one only for the whole.

Another most conscientious and scrupulous dame, when granting her friend enjoyment of her, would always take the upper station and bring her man under her, never abating one jot of this rule. For, by observing the same straitly and regularly, she would say, if her husband or any other did ask whether such an one had done to her, that she could deny even on oath, and assuredly protest, without sinning against God, that never had he done so with her. This oath she did so emphatically make as to quite satisfy her husband and others by dint of her confident swearing in answer to their questions. So did they credit her in what she alleged, "yet had never the wit," she would say, "to demand if ever she had taken the upper part herself; by the which question they would have brought much scorn on me," she said, "and sore trouble of mind."

Methinks I have before now spoke of this point; yet cannot a man always remember everything. Moreover it

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doth better accord with the matter here in hand than with other, as it seemeth me.

Commonly ladies of this sort are great liars, and speak never a word of truth. For so trained are they and broken in to lying,—and truly if they do otherwise, they are fools, and come but to ill,—to their husbands and lovers anent these matters and these changes of love, and so used to swearing they never give themselves to any but them only, that when they come to deal with other matters of consequence, of business or argument, they never do aught but lie, and no man can believe a thing they say.

Other women again I have both known and heard speak of, which would never grant their favours to their lovers but when they were with child, to the end they might not conceive. Wherein they did make great scruple so as not to falsely give their husbands a fruit that was not really theirs, and nourish, feed and bring up the same as their own. I have already spoke on this subject. However, being once pregnant, they would deem they were doing the husband no wrong nor making him cuckold by prostituting themselves.

Very like, some were used to do thus for the same reasons as moved Julia, the Emperor Augustus' daughter and wife of Agrippa, who in her time was a notorious harlot, whereat was her father more sore angered than her husband. Once being asked if that she were not afeared of being made pregnant by her lovers, and her husband noting it and being very wroth with her, she made answer: "Nay! I take good heed in this, for I do receive no man and take never a passenger in my ship, but when it is laden and carrying full cargo."

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Now here we have yet another sort of cuckolds; and these same are true martyrs, they which have wives as ugly as devils in hell, who nevertheless are fain to take their share in tasting the sweets of love just as much as their fairer sisters, though these last properly do deserve this privilege alone according to the proverb: "Handsome men to the gallows, fair dames to the brothel." Yet do these ugly coal-wenches play the gay woman like the rest. And they must needs be forgiven; for are they not women too, and with a like nature and complexion, only not so fair seeming. I have seen very plain women, at any rate in their youth, which did rate themselves just as highly as fairer dames, deeming that a woman is valued at just the worth she doth put upon herself and will sell herself for. Even as at a good market all sorts of wares are sold and pledged, some at a high, some at a lower rate, according to the amount of business a-doing, and the time at which one cometh to market after others, and according to the good or bad price one doth find ruling there. For, as folk say, a man goeth always to the best market, and albeit the stuff be not of the best, the price will depend on the skill of the market-man and market-woman.

So is it with plain women, of whom I have seen some that, by my troth, were as hot and lustful and as well inclined for love as the fairest, and would put themselves on the market and be as fain as any to get a good price and full value.

But the worst thing I find in them is this, that whereas the dealers make offers to the fairest, these others do make offers to the dealers and beg them to take and accept of their goods, the which they are ready to give

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them for nothing or at a very low price. Nay! they go further still; for most often they do give them money to taste of their lecherousness and be debauched of them. Now look at the pity of it! for in payment of such debauching no little sum of money is needed,—so much so that it doth cost more than the person is worth. And yet is the poor husband no less degraded and made cuckold by a plain wife, whose fare is much harder to digest than a beautiful woman's. To say nothing of a man's having to lie by his side a devil of hell, in place of a beauteous angel.

Wherefore I have heard many gallant men say they had rather have a beautiful woman, and one something whorish, than a plain woman, though the most chaste in all the world. For in a foul dame is to be found naught but wretchedness and displeasure; in a fair one is abundance of all pleasure and good happiness,—as some folk maintain. For myself I refer me to such as have trod this roadway and path.

I have heard some men say sometimes, that for husbands it is no such grand thing for them to have their wives chaste. For then are these so boastful of the fact, I mean those women that do possess this most uncommon gift, that you might almost declare them fain to dominate not alone their husbands, but the very world itself and the stars of heaven! Nay! they seem to think, judging from their pride of chastity, that God doth owe them some special return therefor. Yet are they greatly deceived; for I have heard learned Doctors say, how that God doth more love a poor sinful woman, repentant and contrite, as in the case of the Magdalene, than a prideful and haughty dame, which doth suppose she hath surely



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won Paradise, without any need for the pity and merciful judgment of God.

I have heard tell of a lady so boastful by reason of her chastity that she did come so to look down upon her husband, that when asked if she had lain with him, "No!" she would reply, "but he hath lain with me." So proud a dame was she! I leave you to imagine how these same silly, boastful, virtuous wives do chide their poor husbands, even though they may have naught really to reproach them with. So in especial do such wives as are chaste and rich likewise. A wife that is at once virtuous and wealthy in her own right, will ever be playing the disdainful, haughty, proud and bold lady towards her husband, so that by reason of the over high value she doth set on her chastity and her well guarded front, she cannot refrain her from putting on the airs of an empress and chiding her husband on his committing the smallest fault, as I have seen sundry do, and above all on his ill way of life. If he gamble, or be wasteful or extravagant, mightily doth she protest and storm, making her home to seem rather a hell upon earth than an honourable household. Then if he need to sell aught of his property to meet the cost of a journey to Court or to the wars, or of his lawsuits, necessities or minor follies and frivolous expenses, never a word must he speak thereof. For such an empire hath the wife assumed over him, resting it on the strong foundation of her virtue, that her husband must needs refer all to her judgment, as Juvenal well says in one of his Satires:

" . . . Animus uxoris si deditus uni,  
Nil unquam invita donabis conjuge; vendas,  
Hac obstante, nihil haec, si nolit, emetur." <sup>a</sup>

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These lines of the poet show plainly that the ancient Roman dames were in this matter of an humour much akin to that of many ladies of our own day. On the contrary, when a wife is something whorish, she will show herself far more accomodating, more yielding, docile and timid, of a much gentler and more agreeable disposition, more humble and ready to do aught her husband may desire, and more complaisant to him in all things. So have I seen some such which durst never scold or cry out, nor show themselves cross-gained, for fear the husband should confront them with their fault and throw their adultery in their face, and make them to feel the consequences thereof at the cost of their life itself. Then if the gallant fellow is fain to sell some property of theirs, lo! their names are writ to the contract before ever the husband have time to say the word. Many of this sort have I seen. In one word they do what their husbands please.

Well! are these then so sorely hurt to be made cuckold of such fair dames, and to win of them such fine goods and advantages as these,—to say naught of the fine, delightful pleasure they do enjoy in wantoning with suchlike beauteous women, and swimming, so to speak, with them in a beautiful, clear stream instead of a foul and repulsive slough? And since a man must die, as a certain great Captain I know used to say, is it not far better for it to be by a fine fresh sword, bright, clear, shining and keen-edged, than by an old blade, all rusted and ill burnished, one calling for more emery than all the sword-cutlers of Paris together could furnish?

And what I say of young women that are plain, I say the like of some old women, the which are fain to be

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debauched and be kept clean and bright by use, just as much as the fairest in all the world. Elsewhere do I give a special Discourse to this subject (the Fifth Discourse, following). And this is the worst of it: when their husbands cannot fulfil the duty, then the rogues will be calling in substitutes, being every bit as passionate as younger women, or even more so. So have I seen some that neither at the beginning nor the middle of life are ready to be excited, but only at the end. And rightly do men say that in these matters the end is more fierce than the two other ages, the beginning and the middle,—so far as wishing goes. For very often strength and competence are then lacking, a thing that doth vex them sore,—as saith the old proverb: "Tis great grief and pain, when a backside hath right good will, but power is a-wanting.

So are there always some of these poor old wretches, which do admit their lovers gratis, like a muleteer on his beast, and do distribute their largess at the expense of their two purses; but 'tis the money purse only makes these find the other, the body's purse, good and narrow. Thus we say that liberality is more to be esteemed in all matters than avarice and niggardliness, except only with women, who, the more liberal they are, the less are they esteemed, but the avaricious and niggard all the more for being so.

This was what a great Lord did say one time of two great ladies, sisters, whom I know of, whereof the one was niggard of her honour, but liberal of her purse and expenditure, the other exceeding chary of her purse and money, but very liberal of her person.

Next there is yet another sort of cuckolds, one that of

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a surety is utterly abominable and hateful before God and man alike, they who, enamoured of some handsome Adonis, do abandon their wives to men of this kind in order to enjoy their favour in return.

The first time ever I was in Italy, I did hear of an example of this at Ferrara, the tale being told me of one who, captivated by a certain handsome youth, did persuade his wife to accord her favours to the said young man, who was in love with her, and to appoint a day and consent to do all he should bid her. The lady was willing enough, for truly she did desire no better venison to regale herself withal than this. At length was the day fixed, and the hour being come when the young lover and the lady were at their pleasant game and entertainment, lo! the husband, who was hid near at hand, according to the compact betwixt him and his wife, did rush in. So catching them in the very act, he did put his dagger to the lover's throat, deeming him worthy of death for such offence, in accordance with the laws of Italy, which herein be something more rigorous than in France. So was he constrained to grant the husband what he did desire, and they made exchange one with the other. The young man did prostitute himself and the husband did abandon his wife to the young man. Thus was the husband cuckold after an exceeding foul fashion.

I have heard tell of a lady, which being desperately in love with an honourable gentleman whom she had taken for lover and chief favourite, and this latter fearing the husband would do him or her some ill turn, did comfort him, saying, "Nay! have no fear, for he would in no wise dare do aught, for dread I should accuse him of having wished to practice the backdoor Venus, which

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might well bring about his death, if I were to breathe the least word thereof and denounce him to justice. But in this way I do hold him in check and in terror, so that for fear of my accusation, he dares not say one word to me."

Without a doubt such accusation would have involved the poor husband in naught less than peril of his life; for the legists declare that this act is punishable for the mere wish to commit the same. But mayhap the lady did never mean to let out the word altogether, and would not have gone so far as this without reconsidering her intent.

I have been told how in one of these latter years a young French gentleman, a handsome gallant that had been seen many a day at Court, being gone to Rome for instruction in manly exercises, like others his contemporaries, was in that city regarded with so favourable an eye, and did meet with such great admiration of his beauty, as well of men as of women, that folk were ready almost to force him to their will. And so whenever they were aware of his going to Mass or other place of public assemblage, they would never fail, either men or women, to be there likewise for to see him. Nay, more, several husbands did suffer their wives to give him love assignations in their houses, to the end that being come thither and then surprised, they might effect an exchange, the one of his wife, the other of him. For which cause he was advised never to yield to the love and wishes of these ladies, seeing the whole matter had been contrived and arranged merely to entrap him. And herein he did show himself wise and did set his honour and good conscience above all such detestable pleasures, winning thereby a

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high and worthy repute. Yet at the last his squire did kill him. Divers reasons are given therefor. At any rate 'twas a sore pity, for that he was a very honourable young man, of good station, and one that did promise well of his nature as well by reason of his noble actions as of the fine and noble character he did manifest herein. For indeed, as I have heard a very gallant man of my time say, and as is most true, never yet was *bougre* or catamite a brave, valiant and generous man but only the great Julius Cæsar, seeing that by divine permission and ordinance all such abominable folk are brought low and reduced to shame. And this doth make me wonder how sundry, whom I have seen stained by this horrid vice, have yet prospered under heaven in high good fortune; yet doth God wait for them, and at the last we shall surely see them meet their proper fate.

How many women there be in the world, which if they were examined by midwives and doctors and expert surgeons, would be found no more virgin one way than another, and which could at any moment bring action against their husbands. Yet do they dissimulate it and dare not discover the matter, for fear of bringing scandal on themselves and their husbands, or perhaps because they do find therein some greater pleasure than we can suppose. Or it may be for the purpose I have above named,—to keep their husbands in such subjection, if they do make love in other quarters, which indeed some husbands do on these terms allow them to do. Yet are none of these reasons really sufficient to account for the thing.

The *Summa Benedicti* saith: If the husband chooseth thus to take his part contrary to the order of nature,

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he commits a mortal sin; and if he maintain that he may dispose of his own wife as he please, he doth fall into a detestable and foul heresy of sundry Jews and evil Rabbis, which are cited as saying thus, *duabus mulieribus apud synagogam conquestis se fuisse a viris suis cognitu sodomitico cognitatas, responsum est ab illis Rabinis: virum esse uxoris dominum, proinde posse uti ejus utcumque libuerit, non aliter quam qui piscem emit: ille enim, tam anterioribus quam posterioribus partibus, ad arbitrium vesci posse.*

This have I quoted only in Latin, forasmuch as it soundeth ill to honourable and modest ears. Abominable wretches that they be,—thus to desert a fair, pure and lawful habit, to adopt instead one that is foul, dirty, filthy and forbid, and disgraceful to boot.

But if the man will take the woman so, it is lawful for her to separate from him, if there is no other means to cure him. And yet, it is stated again, such women as fear God ought never to consent thereto, but rather cry out for help, regardless of the scandal which might so arise, and of dishonour and the fear of death; for 'tis better, saith the law, to die than to consent to evil. The same book doth say another thing which I deem very strange: that whatsoever way a husband know his wife, provided she may conceive thereby, herein is no mortal sin, but only a venial one. Nor do these same smack at all of marital purity, albeit, as I have before said, it may be permissible in case of pregnant women, as well as such as have a strong and unpleasant breath, whether from the mouth or nose. Thus have I known and heard speak of several women to kiss whom and scent their breath was as bad as smelling at a sewer; or to put it another way, I

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have heard it said of a certain great lady, a very great one indeed I mean, that once one of her ladies declared her breath stank more than a backhouse. These are the very words she used.

I would say more of this, but in truth I have a horror of speaking thereof at all. It hath vexed me to have said so much as I have; but 'tis needful sometimes to lay open public vices in order to reform the same.

### 14.



**NEXT** it behoveth me to mention an ill opinion which many have held and do still hold concerning the Court of our French Kings. Men say the ladies thereof, both maids and wives, do oft times trip, indeed do so customarily. But in this are they very much deceived, for truly there be amongst these very chaste, honourable and virtuous women, nay! even more than elsewhere. Virtue doth reside there just as much, or more than in other places,—a fact we should duly prize, for that it can readily be put to proof.

Je n'alléguerai que ce seul exemple de Mme. la grande-duchesse de Florence d'aujourd'hui, de la maison de Lorraine, laquelle étant arrivée à Florence le soir que le grand-duc l'épousa, et qu'il voulut aller coucher avec elle pour la dépuceler, il la fit avant pisser dans un bel urinoir de cristal, le plus beau et le plus clair qu'il put, et en ayant vu l'urine, il la consulta avec son médecin, qui était un très grand et très savant et expert personnage, pour savoir de lui, par cette inspection, si elle était pucelle oui ou non. Le médecin l'ayant bien fixement et doctement inspectée, il trouva qu'elle était telle comme



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quand sortit du ventre de sa mère, et qu'il y allât hardiment, et qu'il n'y trouverait point le chemin nullement ouvert, frayé ni battu; ce qu'il fit, et en trouva la vérité telle et puis.

Then next morning, in amaze, he did exclaim thus: "Lo and behold, a miracle,—that the girl should thus have come forth a virgin from yonder Court of France!" Truly a curious investigation, and a strange opinion! I know not if the tale be true, but it hath been confidently affirmed to me as being so.

A fine repute for our Court. But indeed 'tis no long while since men generally held that all the ladies of the Court and of Paris city were not so virtuous of their body as they of the open countryside, and such as never left their homes. There have been men known so scrupulous they would never wed with girls or women which had travelled far afield, and seen the world, be it ever so little. Thus in our native Guyenne, in the days of my youth, I have heard not a few gallant gentlemen say this and seen them swear to the same, that they would never wed girl or woman which should ever have gone forth of the Port de Pille, to journey away toward France. Poor silly creatures surely herein, albeit wise and gallant men enough in other matters, to suppose that cuckoldry did never abide in their own houses, at their hearths and in their closets and bedchambers, just as readily,—or mayhap more so, seeing the easy opportunities,—as in the Royal Palaces and the great Royal towns! For could not lovers well enough come thither to suborn, win over, court and undo their wives for them, when they were themselves away at Court, at the wars, or the chase, attending their law business or on their journeyings

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abroad? This they would never understand, but were so simple as to think men would never dare to say one word of love to their ladies, but speak only of their households, gardens, hunting and hawking parties. And so by such blindness and rash confidence they did get themselves cuckolded even more freely than elsewhere; for there is no spot where a fair and clever woman, and an honourable and gallant man, cannot find room and convenience for love-making. Poor fools and idiots that they were! could they not realize how that Venus hath no fixed and special place of abode, as of old in Cyprus, at Paphos and Amathos, and see that she doth dwell everywhere, yea! even in the very herdsmen's cots and the lowly lap of shepherdesses the most simple seeming?

Since some while now have they begun to abandon these silly prejudices. For, having observed that in all parts was risk of this same unhappy cuckoldry, they have of late taken wives wherever they have pleased or been able. Nay! they have gone yet further; for they have sent them or taken them with them to Court, to let their beauty be manifest and have full appreciation, and so strike envy to the heart of all and sundry,—as if for the very end of getting themselves a set of horns!

Others again do nowadays send their wives, or take the same along with them, to plead and influence by their solicitations their suits at law; whereof some really and truly have no law business at all, but do make pretense they have. Or else, if they really have some case toward, they will wilfully prolong the same, the better to prolong their amours. Nay! sometimes husbands will actually leave their wives on duty at the Courts, in the galleries and great Hall thereof, and so away to their own homes,

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deeming these will better do their business for them, and they will win their cause better so. And in truth I do know of several which have so won them, more by the dexterity and delights of their wives' fore parts than by any claim of justice on their side. And so many a time will the wives be gotten with child at this game, and then to avoid scandal,—drugs having failed of their efficacy to preserve them therefrom,—will speedily hie away home to their husbands, feigning they are going thither to look up titles or documents of the which they stand in need, or to institute some enquiry, or else that 'tis to await Martinmas and the re-opening of the Courts, and that being unable in vacation time to make any progress in their suit, they are fain to have a bout of the male and see their households again and husbands. And so they do in sooth, but they were well in child, ere ever they began!

I appeal to many a learned judge and presiding magistrate as to the fine tit-bits these same have enjoyed from time to time of country gentlemen's wives.

'Tis no long while since a very fair, great and honourable lady, which myself have known, going in this wise to forward her case at the Paris Courts, one seeing it did say, "Why! what doth she think to do? She will surely lose, for she hath no great claim of right and justice." But, tell me, doth not her right and justice lie in the beauty of her fore part, even as Cæsar did bear his on the pommel and point of his sword?

Thus are country gentlemen cuckolded by the men of the Law, in revenge for the cuckoldries they themselves commit on judges' and magistrates' good ladies. And indeed some of these last I have seen who have been a fair

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match, when all charms were displayed, for many wives and daughters of Lords, Knights and high-born gentlemen of the Court and other such.

I knew once a great lady, which had been very fair, but years had worn out her beauty. Having a law case at Paris, and seeing her beauty was no more meet to help her to forward and win her process, she did take with her a certain neighbour of hers, a young and pretty woman. And to this end she did supply her with a good sum of money, as much as ten thousand crowns; and so what she could not herself do, willing as she would have been, in this she did find her advantage, and the young lady to boot, and both the twain were well pleased.

'Tis no long while since I saw a mother take thither one of her daughters, albeit she was a married woman, to help her forward her case, having no other business there at all. And truly she is a very fair lady, and well worth a man's while to listen to.

However 'tis high time I should make an end in this my grand discourse concerning cuckoldry. For at the last would my long periods, tossed to and fro in these deep waters and mighty torrents, be clean drowned; and I should never have done, or have wit enough to get me out of the thing, no more than out of that Labyrinth of yore, though I should have the longest and strongest thread was ever in this world for guide and safe conduct.

Finally I will conclude by saying this, that if we are the cause of many ills, and do give torments, martyrdoms and evil times to the poor cuckolds, still we do verily pay for the same through the nose, as the saying is, and are mulcted in a triple interest. For verily the more part of them that do them wrong and make unlawful love, the

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more part of the same gallants, do endure quite as great ills as they inflict, seeing all the jealousies they are liable to, not less from their rivals in the pursuit than from the husbands themselves. Then consider the anxieties and caprices they have to put up with, the risks they run of danger and death, of maiming and wounds, of affronts, insults, quarrels, terrors, pains and penalties of every kind. Think how they must needs endure cold and wet, wind and heat. I say naught here of pox and chancres, all the plagues and diseases they incur at this game, as much with high-born dames as with those of low degree. Thus it is that many and many a time they buy right dear what is granted them, and the game is truly not worth the candle.

Yea! many such have we seen perish miserably, at the very time they were set forth on their way to conquer a whole kingdom. Witness M. de Bussi, the paragon of his day, and many another.

Of such I could cite an host more; but I will leave them unnamed, to the end I may have done, only admonishing lovers and advising them to practise the Italian proverb which saith, *Che molto guadagna chi putana perde!* (He who loseth an harlot, gaineth much).

Amé, Count of Savoy, was often used to say:

En jeu d'armes et d'amours  
Pour une joye cent doulours.  
("In the sport of arms and of love,  
for one joy an hundred dolours.")

using this quaint old word, the better to make out his rhyme. Another saying of his was, that love and anger had this point of great unlikeness one with the other,

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that whereas anger doth pass away soon and very readily from the person affected, love doth so only with the extreme of difficulty.

And this is why we should guard well against love of this sort for that it doth cost us quite as much as it is worth, and doth often lead to great ill fortunes. And to speak the real truth, the more part of patient and contented cuckolds have an hundred fold better time, if only they have the wit to recognise their position and come to an agreement with their wives, than have the active agents. Yea! and many an one have I seen, though his horns were in question, would make mock at us and laugh at all the humours and pretty speeches of us gallants in converse of love with the wife. The same again when we had perchance to do with wily dames, who do make an understanding with their husbands and so sell us. So I knew once a very brave and honourable gentleman, who had long loved a certain fair and honourable lady and had had of her the enjoyment he had been fain of for so long. But one day having observed that the husband and she were making merry at some peculiarity of his, he did take the thing in such dudgeon that he did leave her, and for good; for taking a long journey for to divert his thoughts, he did never speak to the lady again, so he told me. And truly suchlike wily, cunning and fickle dames must be guarded against, as they were savage beasts; for to content and appease their husbands, they will quit their old lovers, and thereafter again take other ones, being in no wise able to do without them altogether.

So too I have known a very honourable and great lady, which yet had this ill fortune with her, that of five or six lovers I have seen her have in my day, all died one after

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the other, not without sore grief on her part therefor. Wherefore did men say of her how that she was Sejanus' horse, seeing all they which did mount her did die, and scarce ever survived. Yet had she this good in her and this merit, that whosoever it may have been, she was never known to change or abandon any of her good friends and lovers while yet living, for to take others instead. Only when they did come to die, she was ever eager to have a new mount, to the end she might not go a-foot. Moreover, as the lawyers themselves maintain, 'tis allowed to adopt any protector one may choose for one's estate and lands, whenas they are deprived of their first master. Such constancy in this fair lady was much to be commended; but albeit *she* was so far firm in her good faith, yet have there ever been an host of other dames that have been far from so constant.

Besides, to speak candidly, 'tis never advisable to grow old in one and the same spot, and no man of spirit ever doth so. A man must be a hold adventurer and ever be turning him this way and that, just as much in love as in war and in other matters. For verily if a sailor do trust to but one anchor in his ship, if he drag this, he is very likely to lose his vessel, especially if it be in an exposed place and in a storm, where squalls and tempestuous waves are more like to occur than in a calm and in harbour.

And in what more dangerous and exposed waters could a man adventure himself and sail forth than in making love to one fair lady only? For though of herself she may not have been wily and cunning at the beginning, yet we men do soon make her so and sharpen her wits by the many strange tricks we play with her, whereby we

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do often hurt ourselves, by making her able to carry the war into our own country, having fashioned and trained her thereto. So is it better far, as a certain gallant gentleman was used to say, to wed some fair and honourable dame, albeit with the risk of having a touch of the horns and suffering this misfortune of cuckoldry that is common to so many, rather than to endure so many hardships and perils in the making of other folks cuckold.

However this is all contrary to the opinion expressed by M. du Gua, to whom one day I did make a proposition on the part of a certain great lady which had begged me so to do, to marry him. But he did make this answer only, that heretofore he had ever deemed me one of his best friends, but that now I did make him think himself deceived in this, by my holding such language to him, trying to hunt him into the very thing he most did hate, that is to get him to marry and be cuckolded, in lieu of his making other men so. He did further say he could always wed plenty of women every year, speaking of marriage as an hidden prostitution of a man's repute and liberty, ordained by a specious law. Moreover that the worst of it was, this, as myself also do see and have noted to be the case, that the more part, nay! all, of them that have thus taken delight in making other folks cuckold, when themselves come to wed, infallibly do they fall into the married, I mean the cuckolded, state. Never yet have I known it fall out otherwise, according to the word, "As thou shalt do to others, so shall it be done unto you."

Before making an end, I will say yet one word more,—how that I have seen a dispute raised that is still undecided, to wit, in which provinces and regions of our Christendom and Europe there be most cuckolds and



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harlots? Men declare that in Italy the ladies are exceedingly hot, and for that cause very whorish, as saith M. de Bèze<sup>1</sup> in a Latin Epigram, to the effect that where the sun is hot and doth shine with most power, there doth it the most heat women, inditing a verse thus conceived;

Credible est ignes multiplicare suos.

(’Tis to believed he doth there multiply their fires.)

Spain is in the like case, though it lie more to the Westward; yet doth the sun there warm fair ladies as well as ever it can in the East.

Flemish, Swiss, German, English and Scotch women, albeit they dwell more to the Northward and inhabit cold regions, share no less in this same natural heat; and indeed I have known them as hot as dames of any other land.

The Greeks have good reason to be so, for that they are well to the Eastward. So in Italy men do pray for *Greca in letto*,—or “a Greek bedfellow.” And in sooth they do possess many attractive points and merits, as is but to be expected, seeing in times of old they were the delight of all the world, and have taught many a secret to the ladies of Italy and Spain, from ancient times even to the present day,—so much so that these do well nigh surpass their teachers, whether ancient or modern. And verily was not the Queen and Empress of all harlots, which was Venus, a Greek?

As for my fair countrywomen of France, in old days they were notoriously very coarse and unrefined, contenting themselves with doing of it in a coarse, rude fashion. But, beginning some fifty years since, they have borrowed so much and learned from other nations so many gentle ways, pretty tricks, charms and attractions, fine clothes,

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wanton looks, or else themselves have so well studied to fashion themselves therein, that we are bound to say that they do now surpass all other women in every way. So, as I have heard even men of foreign nations admit, they are better worth a man's having than any others, not to mention that naughty words in French are more naughty, better sounding and more rousing, than in any other tongue.

Over and above all this, that excellent liberty we have in France, a thing more to be esteemed than aught else, doth surely make our women more desirable and lovable, more easy of access and more amenable, than they of any other nation. Again adultery is not so constantly punished as in other lands, by the good wisdom of our noble Councils and French law-makers, which seeing abuses to arise by reason of such harsh punishments, have something checked the same, and corrected the rigorous laws of a former day, passed by men which herein did allow themselves full license of merry disport, but deprived women altogether of the same privilege. Thus was it not allowed to an innocent woman to accuse her husband of adultery, by any laws imperial or canon, as Cajetan doth assure us. But truly cunning men did make this rule for the reasons named in the following Italian verses:

Perche, di quel che Natura concede  
Cel' vieti tu, dura legge d'honore.  
Ella à noi liberal large ne diede  
Com' agli altri animai legge d'amore.  
Ma l'huomo fraudulento, e senza fede,  
Che fu legislator di quest' errore,  
Vendendo nostre forze e buona schiena,  
Copri la sua debolezza con la pena.

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("Oh! over harsh law of honour, why dost thou forbid the thing that Nature urges us to do? She grants us, as to all animals, the enjoyment of love abundantly and liberally. But the base deceiver, man, knowing only too well the vigour of our loins, has established this mistaken law, so to conceal the weakness of the sexes.")

In a word, 'tis good to love in this land of France. I appeal to our authentic doctors in this science, and even to our courtesans, which will be more apt than I to elaborate subtle details thereanent. And to tell the very truth: harlots are there in all lands, and cuckolds the same, as myself can surely testify, for that I have seen all the countries I have named, and others to boot. Chastity abideth not in one quarter of the earth more than another.

### 15.



OW will I further ask this one question only, and never another, one which mayhap hath never yet been enquired into of any, or possibly even thought of,—to wit, whether two ladies that be in love one with the other, as hath been seen aforetime, and is often seen nowadays, sleeping together in one bed, and doing what is called *donna con donna*, imitating in fact that learned poetess Sappho, of Lesbos, whether these can commit adultery, and between them make their husbands cuckold.

Of a surety do they commit this crime, if we are to believe Martial in Epigram CXIX of his First Book. Therein doth he introduce and speak of a woman by name Bassa, a tribad, reproaching the same greatly in

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that men were never seen to visit her, in such wise that folk deemed her a second Lucretia for chasteness. But presently she came to be discovered, for that she was observed to be constantly welcoming at her house beautiful women and girls; and 'twas found that she herself did serve these and counterfeit a man. And the poet, to describe this, doth use the words, *geminos committere cunnos*. And further on, protesting against the thing, he doth signify the riddle and give it out to be guessed and imagined, in this Latin line:

Hic, ubi vir non est, ut sit adulterium,

"a strange thing," that is, "that where no man is, yet is adultery done."

I knew once a courtesan of Rome, old and wily if ever there was one, that was named Isabella de Luna, a Spanish woman, which did take in this sort of friendship another courtesan named Pandora. This latter was eventually married to a butler in the Cardinal d'Armaignac's household, but without abandoning her first calling. Now this same Isabella did keep her, and extravagant and ill-ordered as she was in speech, I have oft times heard her say how that she did cause her to give her husbands more horns than all the wild fellows she had ever had. I know not in what sense she did intend this, unless she did follow the meaning of the Epigram of Martial just referred to.

'Tis said how that Sappho the Lesbian was a very high mistress in this art, and that in after times the Lesbian dames have copied her therein, and continued the practice to the present day. So Lucian saith: such is the charac-

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ter of the Lesbian women, which will not suffer men at all. Now such women as love this practice will not suffer men, but devote themselves to other women and are called *tribads*, a Greek word derived, as I have learned of the Greeks, from τριβω, τριβειν, that is to say *fricare*. These tribads are called in Latin *fricatrices*, and in French the same, that is women who do the way of *donne con donne*, as it is still found at the present day.

Juvenal again speaks of these women, when he saith:

. . . frictum Grissantis adorat

talking of such a tribad, who adored and loved the embraces of one Grissas.

The excellent and diverting Lucian hath a chapter on this subject, and saith therein how that women do come mutually together. Moreover this name of tribad, which doth elsewhere occur but rarely as applied to these women, is freely employed by him throughout, and he saith that the female sex must needs be like the notorious Philaenis, who was used to parody the actions of manly love. At the same time he doth add, 'tis better far for a woman to be given up to a lustful affection for playing the male, than it is for a man to be womanish; so utterly lacking in all courage and nobility of character doth such an one show himself. Thus the woman, according to this, which doth counterfeit the man, may well be reputed to be more valorous and courageous than another, as in truth I have known some such to be, as well in body as in spirit.

En un autre endroit, Lucien introduit deux dames devissantes de cet amour; et une demande à l'autre si une telle avait été amoureuse d'elle, et si elle avait couché avec elle,

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et ce qu'elle lui avait fait. L'autre répondit librement: "Premièrement, elle me baisa ainsi que font les hommes, non pas seulement en joignant les lèvres, mais en ouvrant aussi la bouche, cela s'entend en pigeonne, la langue en bouche; et, encore qu'elle n'eût point le membre viril et qu'elle fût semblable à nous autres, si est-ce qu'elle disait avoir de coeur, l'affection et tout le reste viril; et puis je l'embrassai comme un homme, et elle me le faisait, me baisait et allentait (je n'entends point bien ce mot), et me semblait qu'elle y prit plaisir outre mesure, et cohabita d'une certain façon beaucoup plus agréable que d'un homme." Voila ce qu'en dit Lucien.

Well, by what I have heard say, there be in many regions and lands plenty of such dames and Lesbian devotees,—in France, in Italy, in Spain, Turkey, Greece and other places. And wherever the women are kept secluded, and have not their entire liberty, this practice doth greatly prevail.

The Turkish women go to the baths more for this than for any other reason, and are greatly devoted thereto. Even the courtesans, which have men at their wish and at all times, still do employ this habit, seeking out the one the other, as I have heard of sundry doing in Italy and in Spain. In my native France women of the sort are common enough; yet it is said to be no long time since they first began to meddle therewith, in fact that the fashion was imported from Italy by a certain lady of quality, whom I will not name.

Several others have I known which have given account of the same manner of loves, amongst whom I have heard tell of a noble lady of the great world, who was superlatively given this way, and who did love many

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ladies, courting the same and serving them as men are wont. So would she take them and keep them at bed and board, and give them whatever they would. Her husband was right glad and well content thereat, as were many other husbands I have known, all of whom were right glad their wives did follow after this sort of affection rather than that of men, deeming them to be thus less wild. But indeed I think they were much deceived; for by what I have heard said, this is but an apprenticeship, to come later to the greater one with men.

How many of these Lesbian dames have I seen who, for all their customs and habits, yet fail not at the last to go after men! Even Sappho herself, the mistress of them all, did she not end by loving her fond, favourite Phaon, for whose sake she died? For after all, as I have heard many fair ladies declare, there is nothing like men. All these other things do but serve them but in the lack of men. And if they but find a chance and opportunity free from scandal, they will straight quit their comrades and go throw their arms round some good man's neck.

I have known in my time two very fair and honourable damsels of a noble house, cousins of one another, which having been used to lie together in one bed for the space of three years, did grow so well accustomed to this, that at the last getting the idea the said pleasure was but a meagre and imperfect one compared with that to be had with men, they did determine to try the latter, and soon became downright harlots. And this was the answer a very honourable damsel I knew did once make to her lover, when he asked her if she did never follow this way with her lady friend,—“No, no!” she replied, “I like men too well.”

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I have heard of an honourable gentleman who, desiring one day at Court to seek in marriage a certain very honourable damsel, did consult one of her kinswomen thereon. She told him frankly he would but be wasting his time; for, as she did herself tell me, such and such a lady, naming her, ('twas one I had already heard talk of) will never suffer her to marry. Instantly I did recognize the hang of it, for I was well aware how she did keep this damsel at bed and board, and did guard her carefully. The gentleman did thank the said cousin for her good advice and warning, not without a merry gibe or two at herself the while, saying she did herein put in a word or two for herself as well as for the other, for that she did take her little pleasures now and again under the rose. But this she did stoutly deny to me.

This doth remind me of certain women which do thus and actually love these friends so dearly they would not share them for all the wealth in the world, neither with Prince nor great noble, with comrade or friend. They are as jealous of them as a beggarman of his drinking barrel; yet even he will offer this to any that would drink. But this lady was fain to keep the damsel all to herself, without giving one scrap to others.

'Tis said how that weasels are touched with this sort of love, and delight female with female to unite and dwell together. And so in hieroglyphic signs, women loving one another with this kind of affection were represented of yore by weasels. I have heard tell of a lady which was used always to keep some of these animals, for that she did take pleasure in watching her little pets together.

Voici un autre point, c'est que ces amours féminines se



traitent en deux façons, les unes par fricarelles, et par, comme dit ce poète, *geminos committere connos*.

Cette façon n'apporte point de dommage, ce disent aucuns, comme quand on s'aide d'instruments façonnés de . . . , mais qu'on a voulu appeler des g. . . .

J'ai ouï conter qu'un grand prince, se doutant de deux dames de sa cour qui s'en aidaient, leur fit faire le guet si bien qu'il les surprit, tellement que l'une se trouva saisie et accommodée d'un gros entre les jambes, si gentiment attaché avec de petites bandelettes à l'entour du corps qu'il semblait un membre naturel. Elle en fut si surprise qu'elle n'eut loisir de l'ôter; tellement que ce prince la contraignit de lui montrer comment elles deux se le faisaient.

On dit que plusieurs femmes en sont mortes, pour engendrer en leurs matrices des apostumes faites par mouvements et frottements point naturels.

J'en sais bien quelques-unes de ce nombre, dont ç'a été grand dommage, car c'étaient de très belles et honnêtes dames et demoiselles, qu'il eût bien mieux valu qu'elles eussent eu compagnie de quelques honnêtes gentilhommes, qui pour cela ne les font mourir, mais vivre et ressusciter, ainsi que j'espère le dire ailleurs; et même que pour la guérison de tel mal, comme j'ai ouï conter à aucuns chirurgiens, qu'il n'y a rien de plus propre que de les faire bien nettoyer làdedans par ces membres naturels des hommes, qui sont meilleurs que des pessaires qu'usent les médecins et chirurgiens, avec des eaux à ce composées; et toutefois il y a plusieurs femmes, nonobstant les inconvénients qu'elles en voient arriver souvent, si faut-il qu'elles en aient de ces engins contrefaits.

—J'ai ouï faire un conte, moi étant lors à la Cour, que la reine mère ayant fait commandement de visiter un jour

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les chambres et coffres de tous ceux qui étaient logés dans le Louvre, sans épargner dames et filles, pour voir s'il n'y avait point d'armes cachées et même des pistolets, durant nos troubles, il y en eut une qui fut trouvée saisie dans son coffre par le capitaine des gardes, non point de pistolets, mais de quatre gros g. . . gentiment façonnés, qui donnèrent bien de la risée au monde, et à elle bien de l'étonnement.

Je connais la demoiselle : je crois qu'elle vit encore ; mais elle n'eut jamais bon visage. Tels instruments enfin sont très dangereux. Je ferai encore ce conte de deux dames de la cour qui s'entr'aimaient si fort et étaient si chaudes à leur métier, qu'en quelque endroit qu'elles fussent ne s'en pouvaient garder ni abstenir que pour le moins ne fissent quelques signes d'amourettes ou de baiser ; qui les scandalisaient si fort et donnaient à penser beaucoup aux hommes. Il y en avait une veuve, et l'autre mariée ; et comme la mariée, un jour d'une grande magnificence, se fut fort bien parée et habillée d'une robe de toile d'argent, ainsi que leur maîtresse était allée à vêpres, elles entrèrent dans son cabinet, et sur sa chaise percée se mirent à faire leur fricarelle si rudement et si impétueusement qu'elle en rompit sous elles, et la dame mariée qui faisait le dessous tomba avec sa belle robe de toile d'argent à la renverse tout à plat sur l'ordure du bassin, si bien qu'elle se gâta et souilla si fort qu'elle ne sut que faire que s'essuyer le mieux qu'elle put, se trousser, et s'en aller en grande hâte changer de robe dans sa chambre, non sans pourtant avoir été aperçue et bien sentie à la trace, tant elle puait : dont il en fut ri assez par aucuns qui en surent le conte ; même leur maîtresse le sut, qui s'en aidait comme elle, et en rit son saoul. Aussi il fallait bien que cette ardeur les maît-

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risât fort, que de n'attendre un lieu et un temps à propos, sans se scandaliser.

Still excuse may be made for maids and widows for loving these frivolous and empty pleasures, preferring to devote themselves to these than to go with men and come to dishonour, or else to lose their pains altogether, as some have done and do every day. Moreover they deem they do not so much offend God, and are not such great harlots, as if they had to do with the men, maintaining there is a great difference betwixt throwing water in a vessel and merely watering about it and round the rim. However I refer me to them; I am neither their judge nor their husband. These last may find it ill, but generally I have never seen any but were right glad their wives should be companionable with their lady friends. And in very deed this is a very different thing from that with men, and, let Martial say what he please, this alone will make no man cuckold. 'Tis no Gospel text, this word of a foolish poet. In this at any rate he saith true, that 'tis much better for a woman to be masculine and a very Amazon and lewd after this fashion, than for a man to be feminine, like Sardanapalus or Heliogabalus, and many another their fellows in sin. For the more manlike she is, the braver is she. But concerning all this, I must refer me to the decision of wiser heads.

Monsieur du Gua and I were reading one day in a little Italian book, called the *Book of Beauty*, writ in the form of a dialogue by the Signor Angelo Firenzuola, a Florentine, and fell upon a passage wherein he saith that women were originally made by Jupiter and created of such nature that some are set to love men, but others the beauty of one another. But of these last, some purely

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and holily, and as an example of this the author doth cite the very illustrious Marguerite of Austria, which did love the fair Laodamia Fortenguerre, but others again wantonly and lasciviously, like Sappho the Lesbian, and in our own time at Rome the famous courtesan Cecilia of Venice. Now this sort do of their nature hate to marry, and fly the conversation of men all ever they can.

Hereupon did Monsieur du Gua criticise the author, saying 'twas a falsehood that the said fair lady, Marguerite of Austria, did love the other fair dame of a pure and holy love. For seeing she had taken up her rather than others which might well be equally fair and virtuous as she, 'twas to be supposed it was to use her for her pleasures, neither more nor less than other women that do the like. Only to cover up her naughtiness, she did say and publish abroad how that her love for her was a pure and holy love, as we see many of her fellows do, which do dissemble their lewdness with suchlike words.

This was what Monsieur du Gua did remark thereanent; and if any man doth wish to discuss the matter farther, well! he is at liberty to do so.

This same fair Marguerite was the fairest Princess was ever in all Christendom in her day. Now beauty and beauty will ever feel mutual love of one sort or another, but wanton love more often than the other. She was married three times, having at her first wedlock espoused King Charles VIII. of France, secondly John, son of the King of Aragon, and thirdly the Duke of Savoy, surnamed the Handsome. And men spake of them as the handsomest pair and fairest couple of the time in all the world. However the Princess did have little

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profit of this union, for that he died very young, and at the height of his beauty, for the which she had very deep sorrow and regret, and for that cause would never marry again.

She it was had that fair church<sup>2</sup> built which lyeth near Bourg en Bresse, one of the most beautiful and noble edifices in Christendom. She was aunt to the Emperor Charles, and did greatly help her nephew; for she was ever eager to allay all differences, as she and the Queen Regent did at the treaty of Cambrai, whereunto both of them did assemble and met together there. And I have heard tell from old folk, men and women, how it was a beauteous sight there to see these two great Princesses together.

Cornelius Agrippa hath writ a brief Treatise on the virtue of women, and all in panegyric of this same Marguerite. The book is a right good one, as it could not but be on so fair a subject, and considering its author, who was a very notable personage.

I have heard a tale of a certain great lady, a Princess, which among all her maids of honour did love one above all and more than the rest. At first were folk greatly surprised at this, for there were plenty of others did surpass her in all respects. But eventually 'twas discovered she was a hermaphrodite.

I have heard a certain great lady also named as being hermaphrodite. She hath a virile member, but very tiny; yet hath she more of the woman's complexion, and I know, by having seen her, she is very fair. I have heard sundry famous doctors say they have seen plenty such.

Well, this is all I shall say on the subject of this Chapter, one I could have made a thousand times longer

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than I have done, having matter so ample and lengthy, that if all the cuckold husbands and their wives that do make them so, were to hold hands, and form a ring, I verily believe this would be great enough to surround and encircle a good half of the globe.

In the days of the late King Francis an old song was current, which I have heard a very honourable and venerable dame repeat, to the following effect:

Mais quand viendra la saison  
Que les cocus s'assembleront,  
Le mien ira devant, qui portera la bannière;  
Les autres suivront après, le vostre sera au derrière.  
La procession en sera grande,  
L'on verra une très longue bande.

(But when the season shall come that the cuckolds shall muster, then mine shall march in front, and shall bear the banner; the rest shall follow after, while yours shall bring up the rear. A grand sight will the procession of them be,—a long, long train!)

Yet would I not inveigh over much against honourable and modest wives, which have borne themselves virtuously and faithfully in the fealty sacredly sworn to their husbands; and I do hope anon to write a separate chapter to their praise, and give the lie to Master Jean de Meung.<sup>8</sup> Now this poet in his *Roman de la Rose* did write these words: Toutes vous autres femmes . . .

Estes ou fustes,  
D'effet ou de volonté, putes.

(Ye women every one are, or have been, mere whores, if not in deed, then in desire.)

By these verses he did incur such ill will on the part of the Court ladies of that day, that by a plot sanctioned

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of the Queen and with her privy, these did undertake one day to whip the poet, and did strip him stark naked. But as all stood ready to strike, he did beseech them that at any rate the greatest whore of all should begin first. Then each for very shame durst not strike first; and in this wise he did escape the whip. Myself have seen the story represented in an old tapestry among the ancient furnishings of the Louvre.

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Not less do I admire a certain Preacher, who one day preaching to a worthy company, and taking occasion to reprove the habits of some women and of their husbands which did endure to be cuckolded of them, did of a sudden set to and shout out: "Yes, I know them well, I can see them, and I am going to throw these two stones at the heads of the biggest cuckolds in the assembly." Then as he did make pretence to throw them, there was never a man in all the congregation but did duck his head, or put up his cloak, or his cape, or his arm, before his face, for to ward off the blow. But the divine, rebuking them, cried, "Did I not tell you? I did suppose there might be two or three cuckolds in my congregation; but lo! by what I see, there is never a man but is one."

Still, let these wild talkers say what they will, there be many very chaste and honourable women, who if they had to give battle to their opposites, would gain the day, not for their numbers but their virtue, which doth resist and easily subdue its contrary.

Moreover when the aforementioned Jean de Meung doth

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blame those women which are "whores, in desire," meseems he ought rather to commend and extol such to the skies, seeing that if they do burn so ardently in their body and spirit, yet put no wrong in practice, they do herein manifest their virtue, and the firmness and nobility of their heart. For they do choose rather to burn and consume away in their own fire and flame of desire, like that rare and wondrous bird the phoenix, than forfeit and stain their honour. Herein they do resemble the white ermine, which had rather die than foul itself,—'tis the device of a very great lady I knew at one time, yet but ill carried out by her,—seeing how, it being in their power to apply the remedy, yet do they so nobly refrain, and seeing there is no greater virtue nor no nobler victory than to master and subdue one's own nature. Hereanent we have a very excellent story in the *Cent Nouvelles* of the Queen of Navarre, concerning that honourable lady of Pampeluna, who albeit in her heart and of desire a whore, and burning for the love of the handsome and noble M. d'Avannes, did choose rather to die in her heat of longing than seek her remedy, as she did find means to inform him in her dying words.

Most unfairly and unjustly then did this same fair and honourable lady bring to pass her own death; and, as I did hear an honourable gentleman and lady say, when discoursing on this passage, the thing was not void of offence against God, seeing she could have saved herself from death. But to so bring it on herself and precipitate it, this is rightly called suicide. And there be many of her kidney which by reason of this great continence and abstinence from the pleasures of love, do bring about their own death, both for body and spirit.



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I have it from a very great physician,—and I fancy he hath given a like lesson and instruction to several honourable dames,—that the human body can scarce ever be well, unless all the parts and members thereof, from the greatest to the least, do all of them and in due accord perform those offices and functions which wise nature hath appointed them for their proper health. All must make one harmony together, like a concert of music, it being in no wise right that while some of the said parts and members are active, others be out of work. So in a commonweal must all officers, artisans, workmen and others, do their several tasks unanimously, without idling and without throwing their work the one on the other, if it is to go well and the body politic to continue healthy and entire. And so is it likewise with the human body.

Suchlike fair ladies, whores in spirit but chaste in body, do verily deserve everlasting praises. Not so they which are cold as marble, dull, slack, and stirless as a rock, and have naught of the flesh about them or any atom of feeling—though such are scarce ever really to be found. These be neither fair nor sought after of men, and may be described in the Latin poet's words,

. . . *Casta quam nemo rogavit,*

(Chaste, seeing no man ever solicited her favours.)

As to this, I do know a great lady, who was used to say to sundry of her companions that were fair of face, "Truly God hath done me a great grace in that he hath not made me fair like you. For then should I have loved like you, and been an harlot even as you are." Wherefore the more should men commend such women as are fair and yet chaste, seeing what their natural bent is.

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Very often too are we deceived in such women. For some of them there be which, to see them so full of airs and graces, so rueful and pitiful of mien, so cold and discreet in bearing, and so straitlaced and modest in their words and severe costume, a man might well take for regular Saints and most prudish dames. Yet are the same inwardly and of heart's desire, and eke outwardly in very deed, downright fine harlots.

Others again we see which by their pleasant ways and merry words, their free gestures and worldly, modish dress, might well be deemed of dissolute manners and ready to give themselves at a moment's notice. Yet of their body will these same be highly correct and respectable dames,—in the world's eye. As to their secret life, we can only guess at the truth, so well is it hid away.

Of these things I could bring forward many and many an example, that myself have seen and heard of; but I will content me with one which Livy doth cite, and Boccaccio in even better terms, of a certain fair Roman dame, by name Claudia Quinta. This lady did ever appear abroad more than all the other Roman ladies in showy and something immodest dress, and by her gay and free bearing did seem more worldly than was meet, and so won a very ill name as touching her honour. Yet when the great day came for the welcoming to the city of the goddess Cybelé, she was cleared of all ill repute. For she had the especial honour, above all other women, to receive the image of the goddess out of the ship, to handle and convey the same to the town. At this were all men astonished, for it had been declared that the best man and the best woman of the city alone were worthy of this office. Note how folk may be deceived in women. One is bound

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to know them well first, and well examine them, before judging them, one sort as much as the other.

So must I, before making an end of this subject, name yet another virtue and property cuckoldry doth contain. This I have of a very honourable and fair lady of a good house, into whose closet being one day entered in, I did find her in the very act of finishing the inditing of a Tale with her own hand. This Tale she did show me very freely, for I was one of her close friends, and she kept no secrets from me. She was very witty and ready of words, and right well endowed for love. Now the opening of the tale was after this wise:

"It doth seem," she saith, "how that among other good properties cuckoldry may bring with it, is the good and excellent knowledge won thereby as to how the wit is right pleasantly exercised for the pleasure and content of human nature. For this it is which doth watch and invent and fashion the needful artifices to succeed, whereas mere nature doth only furnish the desire and sensual appetite. And this may be hid by many ruses and cunning devices that are practised in the trade of love, which doth give horns to poor mankind. For 'tis needful to cajole a jealous, suspicious and angry husband; 'tis needful to cajole and blind the eyes of those that be most ready to suspect evil, and to turn aside the most curious from knowledge of the truth. 'Tis needful to inspire belief in good faith just where is naught but fraud, and frankness where is naught but dissimulation. In a word so many be the difficulties must be overcome to ensure success, these do far exceed what natural endowment can reach. The wit must be given full play, which doth furnish forth pleasure, and maketh more horns than ever

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the body doth, which strictly speaking implanteth and fixeth the same."

Such were the very words of the said fair lady's discourse, without any change whatsoever, which she doth make at the beginning of her story, that she writ herself. However she did disguise the thing under other names; and so, following out the loves of the Lord and lady she hath to do with, and to reach an end and proper perfection, she doth allege that the appearance of love is but one of satisfaction and content. 'Tis altogether without form until the entire gratification and possession of the same, and many a time folk deem they have arrived at this extreme, when really they are far enough from their desire. Then for all recompense remaineth naught but the time lost, a cause for bitter regrets. These last words do deserve to be carefully noted and well weighed, for they do hit the mark and afford matter for serious thought. Still there is no other thing but the actual enjoyment in love whether for man or woman to prevent all regrets for the past time. And for this cause the said honourable lady did give assignation to her lover in a wood, whither oft times she would betake her to walk in a very fair avenue, at the entrance whereof she did leave her women, and so went forward to find him under a fine, spreading, shady chestnut. For it was in summer-tide. "In the which retreat," to go on with the lady's tale in her own words, "there is no doubt what life the twain did lead for a space, and what a fine altar they did raise up to the poor husband in the Temple of Ceraton (Temple of Horns), albeit they were not in the island of Delos, the which fane was made all of horns,—doubtless founded by some gay and gallant fellow of yore."

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This is the way the lady did make a mock of her husband, as well in her writings as also in her pleasures and in very deed. Note well all she saith, for her words do carry weight, being pronounced and writ down by so clever and honourable a dame.

The Tale in truth is right excellent, and I would gladly have copied the same and inserted it in this place. But alas! 'tis too long, for the discourse and negotiations before coming to the end they did, are finely expressed and eke lengthy. First she doth reproach her lover, who was ever praising her extravagantly, how that 'twas the effect rather of native and fresh passion in him than of any especial merit in her, albeit she was one of the fairest and most honourable ladies of the time. Then, for to combat this opinion, the lover must needs give great proofs of his love, the which are right well specified and depicted in the said Tale. Afterward, being now in accord, the pair do exhibit all sorts of ruses, trickeries and love cajoleries, both against the husband and against other folk,—all which be of a surety very excellent and very wittily conceived.

I did beseech the lady to give me a copy of the Tale. This she did very readily, and would have none copy it but herself, for fear of indiscretion; the which copy I do hold as one of my most precious possessions.

Now this lady was very right in assigning this virtue and good property to cuckoldry. For before devoting herself to love, she was not clever at all. But later, having once taken it in hand, she did become one of the most witty and clever women in all France, as well in this province as in others. And in truth she is by no means the only one I have seen which hath got good training by the

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handling of love. For I have known an host of dames which were most silly and awkward at their first beginning; yet had the same not tarried a year at the school of Cupid and his lady mother Venus before they came forth thereof right clever and accomplished adepts in all ways. And for myself I have never yet seen an harlot but was right clever and well able to hold her own.

Now will I ask yet this one question more,—in which season of the year are the most cuckolds made, and which is the most meet for love, and to shake the virtue of a woman, whether wife or maid? Without a doubt common consent hath it there is never a time for this like the Spring, the which doth awaken body and spirit, both put to sleep by the wearisome, melancholic winter-tide. Seeing all birds and beasts do rejoice at this season's coming, and all betake them to love, surely mankind, which have yet stronger feelings and promptings, will experience the same even more, and womenfolk above all others,—an opinion maintained by many philosophers and wise physicians. For truly women do then entertain a greater heat and lovingness than at any other season,—as I have heard sundry fair and honourable dames say, and in especial a certain great lady, that did never miss, so sure as Spring-tide came round, to be more touched and pricked of these feelings than at any other period whatsoever. She was used to say she did feel the fresh grass springing, and did crave after the same like as mare and colts do, and she must needs taste thereof, or she should grow pined and thin. And this she did, I do assure you, and at the season did wax more lustful than ever. Thus three or four new intrigues that I have seen her enter on in her life, all these she did commence in Spring,—and not with-

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out reason; for of all the months in the year, April and May be the most surely consecrate and devoted to Venus, at the which times fair ladies do set them, more than afore, to pet their bodies and deck them out daintily, to arrange their hair in wanton wise and don light raiment. And it may well be said how that these new changes in dress and ways do all aim at one and the same thing, to wit lasciviousness, and to people the earth with cuckoos a-walking about thereon, to match the winged ones that the air of heaven doth produce in these same months of April and May.

Further, 'tis not to be supposed but that fair dames, maids and widows alike, whenas they do behold in their walks abroad in their forests and woods, their warrens, parks, meadows, gardens, shrubberies and other pleas-aunces, beasts and birds all a-making love together and sporting in wanton wise, should feel strange prickings in their flesh, which do make them fain to apply instant remedy for the smart. And this is just one of the persuasive and moving things that a many lovers are wont to say one to the other, when they see their mates lacking heat and flame and zest; for then do they upbraid them, pointing to the example of beasts and birds, the which whether wild or tame, as sparrows and house-pigeons, are ever at some wanton sport, ever engendering and conceiving, all nature at the work of reproduction, down to the very trees and plants. Now this is what a fair Spanish lady found one day to say to a cavalier who was over cold or over respectful: *Sa, gentil cavallero, mira como los amores de todas suertes se tratan y triunfan en este verano, y V. S. quada flaco y abatido*, that is to say, "See, Sir cavalier, how every sort of love doth prevail

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and triumph in this Spring-time; yet all the while you are slack and crest-fallen."

Spring-time ended doth give place to Summer, which cometh after, bringing its hot days with it. And seeing one heat doth provoke another, fair dames do thereby double theirs; and truly no refreshment can so well assuage the same as a *bain chaud et trouble de sperme venerig*. 'Tis in no wise contrary to sense for an ill to be medicined by its contrary, as like is medicined by like. For albeit a woman should bathe her every day, and every day plunge in the clearest fountain of a whole countryside, yet do this naught avail, nor yet the lightest garments ever she can don, for to give her refreshing coolness, though she tuck them up as short as she please, without ever a petticoat, as many do in hot weather. And this is just the worst of it; for in such costume are they drawn to look at themselves, and take delight in their own beauty, and pore over their own charms in the fair sunlight, and thus beholding their bodies so fair, white, smooth, plump and in good case, do of a sudden feel the heat of concupiscence and sore temptation. But indeed of such martyrs of continence mighty few have ever been known; and silly fools would they have been, had it been otherwise. And so they lie there in their fine beds, unable to endure coverlet or sheet, but tucking up their very shifts to display themselves half naked; then at daybreak, as the rising sun doth shine in on them and they come to contemplate their bodies more closely still and at their ease on all sides and in every part, they grow exceeding fain after their lovers and fondly wait their coming. And so, should these by any hap arrive at this moment, lo! they are right welcome, and very soon clipped in their



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arms and close embraced. "For then," say they, "is the very best embracement and enjoyment of any hour of day or night."

None the less is there an old proverb which saith: "June and July, mouth wet and body dry;" and to these may be added the month of August likewise. The same is true also of men, who are in a parlous state when they do get overheated at these seasons, and in especial when the dog-star is in the ascendant,—a thing they should beware of. But if they *will* burn at their own candle, well! so much the worse for them! Women run no such risk, for that every month, and every season, every time and every planet, are good for them.

Then again the good summer fruits appear, that seem as if they must refresh these worthy dames. Some I have noted to eat little of these, others much. Yet for all this, scarce any change is seen in their heat, whether they eat much or little, whether they refrain altogether or eat thereof freely. For the worst of it is that, if there be sundry fruits which have power to refresh, there are many others that have just as powerful a heating effect,—to the which the ladies do most often resort, as also to sundry simples that be of their nature good and pleasant to eat in soups and salads, as for example asparagus, artichokes, morels, truffles, mushrooms, and pumpkins. Then there be sundry newfangled viands which the cooks, at their orders, do well know how to contrive and accommodate at once to their gourmandise and their wanton desires, and which doctors likewise are cunning in ordering them. But if only some wise gallant, expert in these mysteries, would undertake to complete this poor account of mine, he might well fulfil the task far better than I can.

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After all these fine dainties, look to yourselves, that's all, poor lovers and husbands! Verily if you be not well prepared, you are very like to be disgraced, and find the fair ones have left you for pastures new.

Nor is this all; for to these new fruits, and herbs of garden and field, must be added great rich pasties, an invention of late times, compounded of great store of pistachio nuts, pine-seeds and other inflammatory drugs of the apothecary's store, the which Summer doth produce and give in greater abundance than Winter and the other seasons. Moreover in Summer time is there usually a greater slaughter of cockerels and young cocks; whereas in Winter 'tis rather the grown birds, that are not so good or so fitting for this as the young ones, these last being hotter, more ardent and more wanton than the other sort. Here is one, amongst many, of the good pleasures and conveniences that Summer-tide doth afford for lovers.

Now these pasties compounded in this wise of dainty trifles, of young cocks and the tips of artichokes and truffles, or other heating viands, are much used by many ladies, by what I hear said. And these same ladies, when they are eating thereof and a-fishing in the platter, putting their hand into the mess or plunging a fork therein, will bring out and clap in their mouth now an artichoke or a truffle, now a pistachio-nut or a cockscomb or other morsel, and at any of these will cry out with a look of sad disappointment, "Bah! a blank." But when they come across one of the dear cock's crests, and find these under their teeth, lo! they do exclaim, "A prize, by'r lady!" and laugh gaily. 'Tis like at the lottery in Italy;

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and a man might deem they had drawn a real prize and won some rich and precious jewel.

Well! they surely owe good thanks to these same good little cockerels, which Summer doth produce,—as doth the first half of Autumn likewise, the which season I put along with Summer. The same time of each year doth give us many other sorts of fruits and small fowl that are an hundred times more hot than those of Winter-tide or the second half of Autumn, the near neighbour of chill Winter. True this is reckoned part of the season of Autumn; yet can we not gather therein all these excellent simples at their best nor aught else as in the hot time of the year. Yet doth Winter ever endeavour to supply what it may,—for instance those good thistles which do engender an excellent heat and concupiscence, whether raw or cooked, including the little hot field thistles, on the which asses live and thrive and are vigorous love-makers. These Summer doth harden and dry up, whereas Winter doth make the same tender and delicate. Exceeding good salads are made of these,—a new invented delicacy.

Furthermore, and beside all these things, so many other serviceable drugs are sought out by apothecaries, dealers and perfumers, that naught is overlooked, whether for these same pasties or for soups. And of a surety good justification may be found by women for this keeping up and maintaining of the heat in Winter time all ever they can. “For,” say they, “just as we are careful to maintain the heat of the outside of the body by heavy clothing and thick furs, why shall we not do the same for the inside?” The men say on their side, “Nay! what availeth it thus to add heat to heat, like putting silk on silk, contrary to the Canons, seeing of their own selves they be

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hot enough already, and that at whatsoever hour we are fain to assail them, they be always ready by their natural complexion, without resort to any artificial aid at all?" What would you have? Mayhap 'tis that they fear their hot and boiling blood will lose strength and ebb in their veins, and grow chill and icy, and if it be not kept hot, like that of an hermit that liveth on roots alone.

Well! well! let them have their way. 'Tis all good for merry gallants; for women being so constantly in ardour, at the smallest assailment of love upon them, lo! they are taken at once, and the poor husbands cuckold and horned like satyrs! Nay! sometimes they will go still further, these worthy dames, for that they do sometimes share their good pasties, broths and soups with their lovers out of compassion, to the end these may be more doughty and not find themselves overexhausted when it cometh to work, and so themselves may enjoy more exciting and abundant pleasure. Likewise will they give them receipts to have dishes compounded privately in their own kitchens. But herein have some been sore deceived and disappointed. Thus a certain gallant gentleman I have heard tell of, having in this wise taken his special soup and coming all cock-a-whoop to accost his mistress, did threat her how that he would give it her soundly, telling her he had taken his soup and eat his pasty. She did merely answer him, "Well! you shall prove your worth; at present I know naught about it." Presently, when they were now in each other's arms and at work, these dainties did but serve him poorly. Whereon the lady did declare that either his cook had compounded them ill, or had been niggardly of the drugs and ingredients needed, or else he had not made all due preparation before taking his sovran medi-

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cine, or mayhap his body was for that while ill disposed to take it and feel the proper effects thereof. Thus did she make mock of the poor man.

Still 'tis to be remembered all simples and all drugs, all viands and all medicines, are not suitable for all alike. With some they will operate, while others do but draw blank. Moreover I have known women which, eating of these viands, when 'twas cast up to them how they would surely by this means have extraordinary and excessive enjoyment, could yet declare, and affirm the same on oath, that such diet did never cause them any temptation of any sort whatever. But God wot, they must herein surely have been playing the pretended prude!

Now as to the claims of Winter, ladies that do champion this season, maintain that for soups and hot viands, they do know as good receipts for to make these every whit as good in Winter time as at any other part of the year. They do possess ample experience, and do declare this season very meet for love-making. True it is Winter is dim and dark, close, quiet, retired and secret, yet so must love be, and be performed in secret, in some retired and darkling spot,—whether in a closet apart, or in a chimney corner near a good fire, the which doth engender, by keeping close thereto and for a considerable while, as much good heat as ever the Summer can provoke. Then how it is in the dimly lit space betwixt bed and wall, where the eyes of the company, provided they be near the fire a-warming of themselves, do but hardly penetrate, or else seated on chests or beds in remote corners, so to enjoy dalliance. For seeing man and maid pressing the one to the other, folk deem 'tis but because of the cold and to keep them warm. Yet in this wise are

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fine things done, when the lights are far withdrawn on a distant table or sideboard.

Besides, which is best, Summer or Winter, when one is in bed? 'Tis the greatest delight in all the world for lovers, man and maid, to cling together and kiss close, to entwine one with other, for fear of the nipping cold, and this not for a brief space but for a long while, and so right pleasantly warm each other,—all this without feeling aught at all of the excessive heat Summer doth provoke, and that extreme of sweating that doth sore hinder the carrying out of love. For truly in Summer time, instead of embracing tight and pressing together and squeezing close, a pair must needs hold loosely and much apart. Then Winter is best in this, say the ladies, according to the doctors: men are more meet for love, more ardent and devoted thereto, in Winter than in Summer.

I knew once in former days a very great Princess, who was possessed of much wit, and both spake and wrote better than most. One day she did set herself to compose verses in favour and praise of Winter, and the meetness of that season for love. By this we may conceive herself had found it highly favourable and fitting for the same. These stanzas were very well composed, and I had them long preserved in my study. Would I had valued them more, and could find them now, to give the same here, to the end men might read therein and mark the great merits of Wintertide and the good properties and meetness for love of that season.

I knew another very high-born lady, and one of the fairest women in all the world, which being new widowed, and making pretence she cared not, in view of her new weeds and state of widowhood, to go of evenings after

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supper either to visit the Court, or the dance, or the Queen's *couchée*, and was fain not to seem worldly-minded, did never leave her chamber, but suffering all and sundry of her attendants, male and female, to hie them to the dance, and her son and every soul about her, or even actually sending them thither, would retire to her secret chamber. And thither her lover of old, well treated, loved and favoured of her in her married life, would presently arrive. Or else, having supped with her, he would stay on and never leave her, sitting out a certain brother-in-law, who was much by way of guarding the fair lady from ill. So there would they practise and renew their former loves, and indulge in new ones preparatory to a second wedlock, the which was duly accomplished the following Summer. Well! by all I can see after duly considering the circumstances, I do believe no other season could have been so favourable for their projects as Winter was, as indeed I did overhear one of her dainty, intriguing maids also declare.

So now, to draw to an end, I do maintain and declare: that all seasons be meet for love, when they be chosen suitably, and so as to accord with the caprice of the men and women which do adopt the same. For just as War, that is Mars' pastime, is made at all seasons and times, and just as the God doth give his victories as it pleaseth him, and according as he doth find his fighting men well armed and of good spirit to offer battle, so doth Venus in like wise, according as she doth find her bands of lovers, men and maids, well disposed for the fray. Indeed the seasons have scarce aught to do therewith, and which of them is taken and which chosen doth make but little difference. Nor yet do their simples, or fruits, their drugs,

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or drug-dealers, nor any artifice or device that women do resort to, much avail them, whether to augment their heat, or to refresh and cool the same.

For indeed, as to this last, I do know a great lady, whose mother, from her childhood up, seeing her of a complexion so hot and lecherous that it was like to take her one fine day straight on the road to the brothel, did make her use sorrel-juice constantly by the space of thirty years regularly at all her meals, whether with her meat or in her soups and broths, or to drink great two-handled bowls full thereof unmixed with other viands; in one word every sauce she did taste was sorrel-juice, sorrel-juice, everlastingly. Yet were these mysterious and cooling devices all in vain, for she ended by becoming a right famous and most arrant harlot,—one that had never need of those pasties I have spoke of above to give her heat of body, seeing she had enough and to spare of her own. Yet is this lady as greedy as any to eat of these same dishes!

Well! I must needs make an end, albeit I could have said much more and alleged many more good reasons and instances. But we must not be for ever gnawing contentedly at the same bone; and I would fain hand over my pen to another and better writer than myself, to argue out the merits of the divers seasons. I will only name the wish and longing a worthy Spanish dame did once express. The same did wish and desire it to be Winter when her love time should be, and her lover a fire, to the end that when she should come to warm herself at him and be rid of the bitter cold she should feel, he might enjoy the delight of warming her, and she of absorbing his heat as she did get warm. Moreover she would so have oppor-



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tunity of displaying and exposing herself to him often and at her ease, that he might enjoy the sight of her lovely limbs hid before under her linen and skirts, as to warm herself the more thoroughly, and keep up her other, internal, fire and heat of concupiscence.

Next she did wish for Spring to come, and her lover to be a garden full of flowers, with the which she might deck her head and her beautiful throat and bosom, yea! and roll her lovely body among them between the sheets.

Likewise she did oftentimes wish it to be Summer, and her lover a clear fountain or glittering stream, for to receive her in his fair, fresh waters, when she should go to bathe therein and take sport, and so fully and completely to let him see, touch over and over again, each of her lovely, wanton limbs.

Finally she did desire it to be Autumn, for him to return once more to his proper shape, and she to be a woman and her lover a man, that both might in that season have wit, sense and reason to contemplate and remember over all the by-gone happiness, and so live in these delightful memories and reveries of the past, and inquire and discourse betwixt them which season had been most meet and pleasant for their loves.

In such wise was this lady used to apportion and adjudge the seasons. Wherein I do refer me to the decision of better informed writers than myself to say which of the four was like to be in its qualities most delightful and agreeable to the twain.

Now for good and all I do make an end of this present subject. If any will know further thereof and learn more of the divers humours of cuckolds, let him study an old

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song which was made at Court some fifteen or sixteen years ago, concerning cuckolds, whereof this is the burden:

Un cocu meine l'autre, et tousjours sont en peine;  
Un cocu meine l'autre.

(One cuckoo maketh many, and all are in sorry case; one cuckoo many maketh.)

I beg all honourable ladies which shall read any of my tales in this chapter, if byhap they do pay any heed to the same, to forgive me and if they be somewhat highly spiced, for that I could scarce have disguised them in more modest fashion, seeing the sauce such must needs have. And I will say further I could well have cited others still more extravagant and diverting, were it not that, finding it impossible to cover the same with any veil of decent modesty, I was afeared to offend such honourable ladies as shall be at the pains and do me the honour to read my books. Now will I add but one thing further, to wit, that these tales which I have here set down are no petty stories of market-town and village gossip, but do come from high and worthy sources, and deal not with common and humble personages. I have cared not to have aught to do but only with great and high subjects, albeit I have dealt with such discreetly; and as I name no names, I think I have well avoided all scandal and cause of offence.

Femmes, qui transformez vos marys en oyseaux,  
Ne vous en laissez point, la forme en est très-belle;  
Car, si vous les laissez en leurs premières peaux,  
Ils voudront vous tenir toujours en curatelle,

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Et comme hommes voudront user de leur puissance;  
Au lieu qu'estant oyseaux, ne vous feront d'offense.

(Ladies fair, which do transform your husbands into birds, weary not of the task, the shape they so take is a right convenient one. For if you do leave them in their first skins, they will for ever keep you under watch and ward, and manlike will fain to use their power over you; whereas being birds, they will do you no offence.)

Another Song:

Ceux qui voudront blasmer les femmes amiables  
Qui font secrètement leurs bons marys cornards,  
Les blasment à grand tort, et ne sont que bavards;  
Car elles font l'aumosne et sont fort charitables.  
En gardant bien la loy à l'aumosne donner,  
Ne faut en hypocrit la trompette sonner.

(They that will be blaming well meaning wives which do in secret give their husbands horns, these do much wrong by their reproaches, and are but vain babblers; for indeed such dames are but giving alms and showing good charity. They do well observe the Christian law of almsgiving,—never, like the hypocrites, sound the trumpet to proclaim your good deeds!)

An old Rhyme on the Game of Love,—found by the  
Author among some old papers:

Le jeu d'amours, où jeunesse s'esbat,  
A un tablier se peut accompagner.  
Sur un tablier les dames on abat;  
Puis il convient le trictrac préparer,  
Et en celui ne faut que se parer.  
Plusieurs font Jean. N'est-ce pas jeu honneste,

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Qui par nature un joueur admoneste  
Passer le temps de cœur joyeusement?  
Mais en défaut de trouver la raye nette,  
Il s'en ensuit un grand jeu de torment.

(The game of love, whereat youth takes its delight, may be likened to a chess-board. On a chess-board we lay down the pieces,—*dames*, ladies; then 'tis the time to marshal our men, and herein we have but to make the best game we can. Many play the masterful king; and is it not merely fair play, and an abomination of dame Nature, that a man should make his game in hearty, joyous wise? But should he fail to find a sound queen (*quean*), why! his game is like to end in woeful pain and sorrow.<sup>1</sup>)



## SECOND DISCOURSE

*On the question which doth give the more content in  
love, whether touching, seeing or speaking.*

### INTRODUCTION



**T**HIS is a question as concerning love that might well deserve a more profound and deeper writer to solve than I, to wit: which doth afford the more contentment in the fruition of love, whether contact or attouchment, speech, or sight. Mr. Pasquier,<sup>1</sup> a great authority of a surety in jurisprudence the which is his especial profession, as well as in the polite and humane sciences, doth give a disquisition thereon in his letters, the which he hath left us in writing. Yet hath he been by far too brief, and seeing how distinguished a man he is, he should not in this matter have shown himself so niggard of his wise words as he hath been. For if only he had seen good to enlarge somewhat thereon, and frankly to declare what he might well have told us, his letter which he hath indited on this point had been an hundred times more delightful and agreeable.

He doth base his main discourse on sundry ancient rhymes of the Comte Thibaut de Champagne,<sup>2</sup> the which verses I have never set eyes on, save only the small frag-

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ment that M. Pasquier doth quote in his letter. This same good and gallant Knight of yore doth, I conceive, write exceeding well,—not certainly in such good set terms as do our gallant poets of to-day, but still with excellent good sense and sound reason. Moreover he had a right beauteous and worthy subject, to wit the fair Queen Blanche of Castille, mother of Saint-Louis, of whom he was not little enamoured, but indeed most deeply, and had taken her for his mistress. But in this what blame or what reproach for the said Queen? Though she had been the most prudent and virtuous of women, yet could she in any wise hinder the world from loving her and burning at the fire of her beauty and high qualities, seeing it is the nature of all merit and high perfection to provoke love? The whole secret is not to yield blindly to the will of the lover.

This is why we must not deem it strange, or blame this fair Queen, if that she was too fondly loved, and that during her reign and sovereignty there did prevail in France sore divisions and seditions and much civil strife. For, as I have heard said by a very great personage, seditions be oft stirred up as much for intrigues of love as by embroilments of State; and in the days of our fathers was current an old saw, which said that: All the world went mad after the merry-hearted Queen.

I know not for sure of which Queen this word was said; but it may well be 'twas pronounced by this same Comte Thibaut, who very like, either because he was treated ill of her as concerning that he was fain of, or that his love was scorned altogether, or another preferred before him, did conceive in his heart such a disgust and discontent as did urge him to his ruin in the wars and troubles of the time.

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So doth it often fall out when a fair and high-born Queen or Princess or great lady doth set her to govern a State, that every man doth love to serve her, and to honour and pay respect to her, as well for the good happiness of being agreeable to her and high in her favour, as to the end he may boast him of governing and ruling the State along with her, and drawing profit therefrom. I could allege many examples, but I had liever refrain.

Be this as it may, this Comte Thibaut did find inducement in the fair subject I have named to write excellent verses, and mayhap to pose the question which M. Pasquier doth cite for us. To this latter I do refer the curious reader, and do say naught here of rhymes good or ill; for 'twould be pure waste of words so to do. 'Twill be enough for me at this present to declare what I think thereanent, whether of mine own judgment or of that of other more experienced lovers than I.

### 1.

#### OF THE SENSE OF TOUCH IN LOVE



OW as to touch, it must be allowed that touching is very delightful, for that the perfection of love is to enjoy the delight thereof, and the said enjoyment cannot be had without touching. For even as hunger and thirst can in no wise be assuaged or appeased except by eating and drinking, so too doth not love pass by dint either of seeing or hearing only, but by touching, kissing and the practice of Venus' rites. To this did that witty coxcomb Diogenes the Cynic allude facetiously, yet somewhat nastily, when he said he only

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wished he could relieve his hunger by rubbing his belly, even as *frottant la verge* he did appease the paroxysm of desire. I would fain have put this in plainer words, but 'tis a thing must needs be passed over trippingly. He was something like that lover of Lamia, who having been too extravagantly fleeced by her to be able to enjoy her love any more, could not or would not consent to lose the pleasure of her. Wherefore he did devise this plan: he would think of her, and so thinking corrupt himself, and in this fashion enjoy her in imagination. But she hearing of this, did summon him before the Judge to render her satisfaction and payment for his enjoyment. Whereupon the Judge did order that he should but *show* her the money, whose sound and tinkle would be payment enough, and she would so enjoy the gold in imagination just as the other in dreams and fancy had had the gratification of *his* desire.

True, many other sorts of love may be alleged against what I say, the which the old philosophers do feign; but for these I do refer me to these same philosophers and the like subtle persons who will fain be discussing such points. In any case forasmuch as the fruit of mere earthly love is no other thing but enjoyment thereof, it must needs be deemed to be rightly attained only by dint of touching and kissing. So likewise have many held this pleasure to be but thin and poor, apart from seeing and speaking; whereof we have a good example in the *Cent Nouvelles* of the Queen of Navarre. An honourable gentleman, having several separate times enjoyed the favours of a certain honourable lady, at night time and disguised with a small hand-mask, (for regular masks as now used were not yet employed), in a dark, ill-lighted gallery or pas-



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sage, albeit he was right well assured by the sense of touch there was nothing here but what was good, tasty and exquisite, yet was not content, but was fain to know with whom he had to do. Wherefore one day as he was a-kissing her and did hold her in his arms, he did make a mark with chalk on the back of her gown, which was of black velvet; and then in the evening after supper, (for their assignations were at a certain fixed hour), as the ladies were coming into the ball-room, he did place himself behind the door. Thus noting them attentively as they passed in, he saw his own fair one enter with the chalk mark on her shoulder; and lo! it was such an one as he would never have dreamed of, for in mien and face and words she might have been taken for the very Wisdom of Solomon, and by that name the Queen was wont to describe her.

Who then was thunderstruck? Who but the gentleman, by reason of his great good fortune, thus loved of a woman which he had deemed least like so to yield of all the ladies of the Court? True it is he was fain to go further, and not stop at this; for he did much desire to discover all, and know wherefore she was so set on hiding herself from him, and would lief have herself thus served under cover and by stealth. But she, crafty and wily as she was, did deny and re-deny everything, to the renunciation of her share in Paradise and the damnation of her immortal soul,—as is the way of women, when we will throw in their faces love secrets they had rather not have known, albeit we be certain of the fact, and they be otherwise most truthtelling.

She grew angry at his persistence; and in this way did the gentleman lose his good fortune. For good it was of

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a surety, seeing the lady was a great lady and well worth winning. Moreover as she was for playing the sugared, chaste, demure prude, herein he might well have found double pleasure,—part for the sensual enjoyment of so sweet, good and delicate a morsel, part that of gazing at her oft times in company, with her demure, coy mien, her cold and modest look and her conversation all chaste, strict and precise, thinking the while in his own mind of her wanton ways, her gay abandonment and naughtiness whenas they two were alone together.

Thus we see the said gentleman was much at fault to have asked her any questions. Rather should he have steadily pursued his pleasure and eaten his meat in quiet, just as tasty without candle at all as if illuminated by all the lights of a festal chamber. Still he had a right to know who she was! and in a way his inquisitiveness was praiseworthy, seeing, as the Tale doth declare, he was afeared he had to do with some kind of demon. For devils of the sort love to change shape and take the form of women for to have intercourse with men, and do so deceive them sore. However, as I have heard sundry skilled in magic arts declare, such do find it more easy to take on the shape and countenance of a woman than to imitate her speech.

And this is why the said gentleman was right in wishing to see and know with whom he had to do; and by what he said himself, 'twas her refraining altogether from speech that did cause him more apprehension than what he saw, and did set him on thinking of the Devil. And herein he but showed a proper fear of God.

But surely, after having discovered all the truth, he should have said never a word. But, nay! another will say

to this, friendship and love be not perfect but when openly declared of heart and mouth; and for this cause the gentleman would fain have told her his passion. Anyhow he did gain naught thereby; but rather lost all. Moreover by any who had known the real honour of this gentleman, he will be excused, for he was in no wise so cold or so discreet as naturally to play this game and display such overcaution; and by what I have heard my mother say, which was in the service of the Queen of Navarre, and did know sundry secrets concerning the *Nouvelles*, and was one of the devisers of this work, the hero of the Tale was my own uncle, the late M. de la Chastaigneraie, a man of a rough, ready and somewhat fickle disposition.

The Tale is so disguised however as to carefully hide who it was; for in reality the said mine Uncle was never in the service of the great Princess, the mistress of the lady in question, though he was in that of the King, her brother. And so he did continue, for he was much loved both of the King and the Princess. As for the lady, I will by no means tell her name; but she was a widow and lady in waiting to a very great Princess, and one that was better at showing the part of a prude than of a Court lady.

I have heard tell of another Court lady under our late Sovereigns, and one I do know by acquaintance, who being enamoured of a very honourable gentleman of the Court, was fain to imitate the way of love adopted by the aforementioned lady. But every time she did return from her assignation and rendez-vous, she would betake her to her chamber and there have herself examined by one of her maids or chamberwomen on all sides, to make sure she was not marked; by the which means she did guard her-

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self from being discovered and recognized. Nor was she ever marked until the ninth time of meeting, when the mark was at once discovered and noted by her women. Wherefore, for dread of being brought to shame and falling into disgrace, she did break it all off, and never after returned to the tryst.

It had been better worth her while, it may be suggested, to have let her lover make these marks at his good pleasure, and then, directly they were made, have unmade and rubbed out the same. In this way she would have had double pleasure,—first of the amorous delight enjoyed, and secondly that of making mock of her man, who was so keen to discover his philosopher's stone, to wit to find out and recognize her, yet could never succeed.

I have heard tell of another in the days of King Francis in connection with that handsome Squire, Gruffy by name, which was a squire of the Stable under the said King, and died at Naples in the suite of M. de Lantric on his journey thither. The dame in question was a very great lady of the Court and did fall deep in love with him; for indeed he was exceedingly handsome, and was commonly known by no other title than *the handsome Gruffy*. I have seen the man's portrait, which doth certainly show him to have been so.

She did secretly summon one day her valet of the chamber, in whom she had trust, but yet a man unknown to most by sight, into her closet. This man she did charge to go tell Gruffy, the messenger being handsomely dressed to seem to be one of her gentlemen, that a very honourable and fair lady did send him greeting, and that she was so smit with love for him she did greatly desire his acquaintance,—more than that of any man at court. Yet must it

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be under this condition that for nothing in all the wide world must he see her or discover who she was. But at the hour of retiring, and when every member of the Court should be abed, he would come for him and meet him at a certain spot he would indicate, and from whence he would lead him to the chamber of his lady. However there was yet a further condition, to wit that he was to muffle his eyes in a fair white kerchief, like a trumpet led into an enemy's city at a truce, to the end he might not see nor recognize the place and chamber wither he was to lead him, and that he was to hold him by the hands all the time to hinder him from undoing the said kerchief. For such were the conditions his mistress had ordered him to offer, to the end she might not be known of him before a certain fixed and given time which he did name and appoint to him. All which being so, he was to ponder it over and decide at leisure whether he would agree to the said conditions, and was to let the messenger know his answer the next day. For he said he would come for him then at a certain place he did name; but above all he must be alone. And he said he would take him on so good an errand he would never regret having gone on the same.

Truly an agreeable assignation, but conjoined with strange conditions! I like no less that of a Spanish lady, which did summon one to a meeting, but with the charge he should bring with him thither three S.S.S., which were to signify *sabio, solo, segreto*, "prudent, alone and secret." The other did assure her he would come, but that she should adorn and furnish herself with three F.F.F., that is she must not be *fea, flaca* nor *fria*, "ill-favoured, slack nor cold."

To return to Gruffy's story,—the go-between now left

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him, having delivered his message. Who so embarrassed and full of thought as he? Indeed, he had much cause for thought, whether it were not a trick played him by some enemy at Court, to bring him into trouble,—his death mayhap or at least the King's displeasure. He pondered too what lady it could be, tall, short or of middle stature, well or ill favoured,—which last did most trouble him, though truly all cats be grey at night time, they say, and all spots alike in the dark. However, after confiding the matter to one of his intimate comrades, he did resolve to try the risk, deeming that to win the love of a great lady, which he did conclude her to be, he must suffer no fear or apprehension to stay him. Wherefore the next night, when the King, the Queen and her ladies, all the gentlemen and ladies of the Court, were retired to bed, he made no fail to be at the spot the messenger had appointed him. The latter in likewise soon came for him there with a companion to help him keep guard, if the other were followed neither by page, lackey nor gentleman. The instant he saw him, he said this only, "Come, Sir! the lady waits you." Then in a moment he bound his eyes, and did conduct him through dark, narrow places and unknown passages, in such wise that the other told him frankly he had no notion whither he was taking him. Thus did he introduce him to the lady's chamber, which was so dim and dark he could see or distinguish naught therein, no more than in an oven.

Well, there he did find the lady smelling right sweet and richly perfumed, the which made him hope for some dainty treat. Whereupon the valet did straightway make him disrobe, and himself aided him; and next led him by the hand, after taking off the kerchief from his face, to the

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lady's bed, who was awaiting him with right good will. Then did he lay himself down beside her, and began to caress her, in the which he found naught but what was good and delicious, as well her skin as her linen and magnificent bed, which he did explore with his hands. So with right merry cheer did he spend his night with the fair lady. I have heard her name, but will not repeat it. In a word he was well and thoroughly satisfied at all points; and recognized how he was excellently well lodged for the night. The only thing that troubled him, he said, was that he could never draw one single word out of her. She took good heed of this, seeing he was used oft times to speak with her by day, as with other Court ladies, and so would have known her voice directly. Yet at the same time, of frolickings and fondlings, handlings and caresses, and every sort of love shows and wantonness, she was most lavish; and he did find his entertainment much to his mind.

Next morning at break of day the messenger did not fail to come and wake him, make him get up, and dress him, then bind eyes as before, lead him back to the spot whence he had taken him, and commend him to God till his next return, which he promised should be soon. Nor did he omit to ask him if he had lied at all, and if he were not glad to have trusted him, and whether he thought he had showed himself a good quartermaster, and had found him good harbourage.

The handsome Gruffy, after thanking him an hundred times, bade him farewell, saying he would always be ready to come back again for such good entertainment, and would be very willing to return when he pleased. This did he, and the merry doings continued a whole month, at the end of which time it behoved Gruffy to depart on his

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## LIVES OF FAIR AND GALLANT LADIES

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Naples journey. So he took leave of his mistress and bade her adieu with much regret, yet without drawing one single word from her lips, but only sighs and the tears which he did note to flow from her eyes. The end was he did finally leave her without in the least recognizing her or discovering who she was.

Since then 'tis said this lady did practice the same way of life with two or three others in similar fashion, in this manner taking her enjoyment. And some declared she was fain to adopt this crafty device, because that she was very niggardly, and in this wise did spare her substance, and was not liable to make gifts to her lovers. For in truth is every great lady bound by her honour to give, be it much or little, whether money or rings or jewels or it may be richly wrought favours. In this way the gallant dame was able to afford her person disport, yet spare her purse, merely by never revealing who she was; and by this means could incur no reproof in relation to either of her purses, whether the natural or the artificial, as she did never let her identity be known. A sorry humour truly for a high-born dame to indulge!

Some will doubtless find her method good, while others will blame her, and others again deem her a very astute person. Certain folk will esteem her an excellent manager and a wise, but for myself I do refer me to others better qualified to form a good judgement thereon than I. At any rate she can in no wise incur such severe censure as that notorious Queen which did dwell in the Hôtel de Nesle at Paris.<sup>1</sup> This wicked woman did keep watch on the passers-by, and such as liked her for their looks and pleased her best, whatsoever sort of folk they were, she would have summoned to her side. Then after having



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gotten of them what she would, she did have them cast down from the Tower, the which is yet standing, into the water beneath, and so drowned them.<sup>2</sup>

I cannot say for sure if this be a true tale. At any rate the common folk, at least the most of them at Paris, do declare it is. And so familiar is the tale, that if one but point to the Tower, and ask about it, they will of their own accord recount the story.

Well, let us quit these unholy loves, which be nothing better than sheer monstrosities. The better part of our ladies of to-day do abhor such, as they are surely right to do, preferring to have free and frank intercourse with their lovers and not to deal with them as though they were of stone or marble. Rather, having well and carefully chosen them, they know well how to be bravely and generously served and loved of them. Then when they have thoroughly tried their fidelity and loyalty, they do give themselves up to an ardent love with them, and take their pleasure with the same not masked, nor silent, nor dumb, nor yet in the darkness of night and mystery. Nay! but in the free and open light of day they do suffer them to see, touch, taste and kiss their fair bodies, entertaining them the while with fine, lecherous discourse, merry, naughty words and wanton conversation. Yet sometimes will they have recourse to masks; for there be ladies which are at times constrained to wear them when a-doing of it, whether it be on account of sun-burn they do so, for fear of spoiling their complexion, or for other causes. Or they may use them to the end that, if they do get too hot in the work, and are suddenly surprised, their red cheeks may escape note, and the disorder of their countenances. I

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have known such cases. But the mask doth hide all, and so they befool the world.

### 2.

#### OF THE POWER OF SPEECH IN LOVE

 HAVE heard many fair ladies and cavaliers which have practised love declare how that, but for sight and speech, they had rather be like brute beasts, that following a mere natural appetite of the senses, have no thought of love or affection, but only to satisfy their sensual rage and animal heat.

Likewise have I heard many lords and gallants which have lain with high-born ladies say, that they have ever found these an hundred times more lascivious and outspoken in words than common women and the like. Herein do they show much art, seeing it is impossible for a man, be he as vigorous as he may, to be alway hard at the collar and in full work. So when the lover cometh to lie still and relax his efforts, he doth find it so pleasant and so appetizing whenas his lady doth entertain him with naughty tales and words of wit and wantonness, that Venus, no matter how soundly put to sleep for the time being, is of a sudden waked up again. Nay! more, many ladies, conversing with their lovers in company, whether in the apartments of Queens and Princesses or elsewhere, will strangely lure them on, for that they will be saying such lascivious and enticing words to them that both men and women will be just as wanton as in a bed together.

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Yet all the while we that be onlookers will deem their conversation to be of quite other matters.

This again is the reason why Mark Antony did so love Cleopatra and preferred her before his own wife Octavia, who was an hundred times more beautiful and lovable than the Egyptian Queen. But this Cleopatra was mistress of such happy phrases and such witty conversation, with such wanton ways and seductive graces, that Antony did forget all else for love of her.

Plutarch doth assure us, speaking of sundry quips and tricks of tongue she was used to make such pretty play withal, that Mark Antony, when he would fain imitate her, was in his bearing (albeit he was only too anxious to play the gallant lover) like naught so much as a common soldier or rough man-at-arms, as compared with her and her brilliant ways of talk.

Pliny doth relate a story of her which I think excellent, and so I will repeat the same here in brief. One day, being in one of her wildest moods, she was attired most enticingly and to great advantage, and especially did wear on her head a garland of divers blossoms most suitable to provoke wanton imaginings. Well, as they sat at table, and Mark Antony was fain to drink, she did amuse him with pleasant discourse, and meanwhile all the time she spake, she kept plucking out one by one fair flowers from her garland (but they were really strewed over every one with poisonous essences), and tossing the same from time to time into the cup Antony held ready to drink from. Presently when she had ended her discourse and Mark Antony was on the point of lifting the goblet to his lips to drink, Cleopatra doth stay him suddenly with her hand, and having stationed some slave or con-

demned criminal ready to hand, she did call this fellow to her and made them give him the draught Mark Antony was about to swallow. On drinking this he fell down dead; and she turning to Antony, said, "And if I did not love you as I do, I should e'en now have been rid of you; yea! and would gladly have had it so, only that I see plainly I cannot live without you." These words and this device were well fitted to confirm Mark Antony in his passion, and to make him even more submissive before his charmer's feet.

In such ways did her cleverness of tongue serve Cleopatra, whom all the Historians do describe as having been exceedingly ready of speech. Mark Antony was used never to call her anything but "the Queen," by way of greater distinction. So he did write to Octavius Cæsar, previous to the time when they were declared open enemies: "What hath changed you," he writes, "concerning my loving the Queen? She is my wife. Is it but now I have begun the connection? You fondle Drusilla, Tortalé, Leontiphé and a dozen others; what reck you on whom you do bestow your favour, when the caprice seizeth you?"

In this letter Mark Antony was for extolling his own constancy, and reproaching the other's changeableness, for loving so many women at once, while himself did love only the Queen. And I only wonder Octavius did not love her too after Antony's death. It may well be he had his pleasure when he had her come alone to his chamber, and he there beheld her beauty and heard her address him; or mayhap he found her not so fair as he had thought, or scorned her for some other reason, and did wish to make his triumph of her at Rome and show her in his public

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procession. But this indignity she did forestall by her self-inflicted death.

There can be no doubt, to return to our first point, that when a woman is fain after love, or is once well engaged therein, no orator in all the world can talk better than she. Consider how Sophonisba hath been described to us by Livy, Appian and other writers, and how eloquent she did show herself in Massinissa's case, when she did come to him for to win over and claim his love, and later again when it behooved to swallowed the fatal poison. In short, every woman, to be well loved, is bound to possess good powers of speech; and in very deed there be few known which cannot speak well and have not words enough to move heaven and earth, yea! though this were fast frozen in mid winter.

Above all must they have this gift which devote themselves to love. If they can say naught, why! they be so savourless, the morsel they give us hath neither taste nor flavour. Now when M. du Bellay, speaking of his mistress and declaring her ways, in the words,

De la vertu je sçavois deviser,  
Et je sçavois tellement éguiser,  
Que rien qu'honneur ne sortait de ma bouche;  
Sage au parler et folastre à la couche.

(Of virtue I knew how to discourse, and hold such fair language, naught but honour did issue from my mouth; modest in speech, and wanton a-bed.)

doth describe her as "modest in speech, and wanton a-bed,"<sup>1</sup> this means of course in speaking before company and in general converse. Yet when that she is alone and

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in private with her lover, every gallant dame is ready enough to be free of her speech and to say what she chooseth, the better to provoke his passion.

I have heard tales told by sundry that have enjoyed fair and high-born ladies, or that have been curious to listen to such talking with others a-bed, how that these were every whit as free and bold in their discourse as any courtesans they had ever known. And this is a noteworthy fact that, accustomed as they were so to entertain their husbands or lovers with lecherous and wanton words, phrases and discourse, and even freely to name the most secret parts of their bodies, and this without any disguise, yet when the same ladies be set to polite converse, they do never go astray and not one of all these naughty words doth ever issue from their lips. Well, we can only say they are right well skilled in self-command and the art of dissimulation; for no other thing is there which is so frisky and tricksome as a lady's tongue or an harlot's.

So I once knew a very fair and honourable lady of the great world, who one day discoursing with an honourable gentleman of the Court concerning military events in the civil wars of the time, did say to him: "I have heard say the King hath had every spot in all that countryside broke down." Now when she did say "every spot, what she meant to say was every bridge" (pont); but, being just come from her husband, or mayhap thinking of her lover, she still had the other word fresh in her mouth. And this same slip of the tongue did mightily stir up the gentleman for her. Another lady I knew, talking with a certain great lady and one better born than herself, and praising and extolling her beauty, did presently say

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thus to her, "Nay! Madam, what I tell you, is not to *futter* you," meaning to say, *flatter* you, and did afterward correct herself. The fact is her mind was full of fluttering and such like.

In short, lively speech hath a very great efficacy in the game of love; and where it is lacking, the pleasure is incomplete. So in very truth a fair body, if it have not a fair mind to match, is more like a mere image of itself or idol than a true human body. However fair it may be, it must needs be seconded by a fair mind likewise, if it is to be really loved; and if this be not so by nature, it must be so fashioned by art.

The courtesans of Rome do make great mock of the gentlewomen of the same city, which are not trained in witty speech like themselves, and do say of them that *chiavano come cani, ma che sono quiete della bocca come sassi*, that is, "they yield them like bitches, but are dumb of mouth like sticks and stones."

And this is why I have known many honourable gentlemen which have declined the acquaintance of ladies, and very fair ladies I tell you, because that they were simpletons, without soul, wit or conversation, and have quitted them for good and all, saying they would as soon have to do with a beautiful statue of fair white marble, like that Athenian youth which did love a statue, and went so far as to take his pleasure thereof. And for the same reason strangers that do travel in foreign lands do seldom care to love foreign women, nor are at all apt to take a fancy to them. For they understand not what they say, and their words in no wise touch their hearts. I speak of course of such as know not their language. And if they do go with them, 'tis but to satisfy nature, and quench the

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mere brute flame of lust, and then *andar in barca* ("away to the ship"), as said an Italian who had come ashore one day at Marseilles on his way to Spain, and enquired a place where women were to be found. He was directed to a spot where a wedding feast was being held. So when a lady came up to accost him and engage him in conversation, he said to her only, *V. S. mi perdona, non voglio parlare, voglio solamente chiavare, e poi me n'andar in barca*,—"Pardon me, Madam; I want not to talk, but only to do, and then away again to the ship."

A Frenchman doth find no great pleasure with a German, Swiss, Flemish, English, Scotch, Slavonian, or other foreign woman, albeit she should chatter with the best, if he understand her not. But he taketh great delight with his French mistress, or with an Italian or Spanish woman, for generally speaking the most part of Frenchmen of our day, at any rate such as have seen the world a little, can speak or understand these languages. And God wot, it matters not if he be skilled and meet for love, for whosoever shall have to do with a Frenchwoman, an Italian, Spanish or Greek, and she be quick of tongue, he must needs frankly own he is fairly caught and conquered.

In former times this our French tongue was not so excellent and rich a language as nowadays it is; whereas for many a long year the Italian, Spanish and Greek have been so. And I will freely own I have scarce ever seen a lady of these nations, if she have but practised a little the profession of love, but hath a very good gift of speech. I do refer me to them that have dealt with such women. Certain it is, a fair lady, if endowed with fair and witty words, doth afford double contentment.



3.

OF THE POWER OF SIGHT IN LOVE

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**T**O speak next of the power of sight. Without a doubt, seeing the eyes be the first part to join combat in love, it must be allowed that these do give a very great contentment, whenas they are the means to our beholding something fair and rare in beauty. And by my faith! what thing is there in all the world a man may see fairer than a fair woman, whether clothed and handsomely tricked out, or naked? If clothed, then 'tis only the face you see naked; but even so, when a fair body, of a beauteous shape, with fine carriage and graceful port, stately look and proud mien, is presented to our view in all its charms, what fairer and more delightsome display can there be in all the world? Then again, when you come to enjoy a fair lady, thus fully dressed and magnificently attired, the desire and enjoyment of her are doubled, albeit a man doth see only the face, while all the other parts of the body are hid. For indeed 'tis a hard matter to enjoy a great lady according to all the conveniences one might desire, unless it were in a chamber apart at full leisure and in a secret place, to do what one best liketh. So spied upon is such an one of all observers!

And this is why a certain great lady I have heard speak of, if ever she did meet her lover conveniently, and out of sight of other folk and fear of surprise, would always seize the occasion at once, to content her wishes as

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promptly and shortly as ever she could. And indeed she did say to him one day, "They were fools, those good ladies of former days, which being fain of over refinement in their love pleasure, would shut themselves up in their closets or other privy places, and there would so draw out their sports and pastimes that presently they would be discovered and their shame made public. Nowadays must we seize opportunity whenever it cometh, with the briefest delay possible, like a city no sooner assailed than invested and straightway captured. And in this wise we do best avoid the chance of scandal."

And I ween the lady was quite right; for such men as have practised love, have ever held this a sound maxim that there is naught to be compared with a woman in her clothes. Again when you reflect how a man doth brave, rumple, squeeze and make light of his lady's finery, and how he doth work ruin and loss to the grand cloth of gold and web of silver, to tinsel and silken stuffs, pearls and precious stones, 'tis plain how his ardour and satisfaction be increased manifold,—far more than with some simple shepherdess or other woman of like quality, be she as fair as she may.

And why of yore was Venus found so fair and so desirable, if not that with all her beauty she was alway gracefully attired likewise, and generally scented, that she did ever smell sweet an hundred paces away? For it hath ever been held of all how that perfumes be a great incitement to love.

This is the reason why the Empresses and great dames of Rome did make much usage of these perfumes, as do likewise our great ladies of France,—and above all those of Spain and Italy, which from the oldest times have been

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more curious and more exquisite in luxury than French-women, as well in perfumes as in costumes and magnificent attire, whereof the fair ones of France have since borrowed the patterns and copied the dainty workmanship. Moreover the others, Italian and Spanish, had learned the same from old models and ancient statues of Roman ladies, the which are to be seen among sundry other antiquities yet extant in Spain and Italy; the which, if any man will regard them carefully, will be found very perfect in mode of hair-dressing and fashion of robes, and very meet to incite love. On the contrary, at this present day our ladies of France do surpass all others. 'Tis to the Queen of Navarre<sup>1</sup> they do owe thanks for this great improvement.

Wherefore is it good and desirable to have to do with suchlike fair ladies so well appointed, so richly tricked out and in such stately wise. So have I heard many courtiers, my comrades, declare, as we did discourse together on these matters,

*De sorte que j'ai ouï dire à aucuns courtisans, mes compagnons, ainsi que nous devisions ensemble, qu'ils les aimaient mieux ainsi que désacoutrées et couchées neus entre deux linceuls, et dans un lit le plus enrichi de broderie que l'on sut faire.*

*D'autres disaient qu'il n'y avait que le naturel, sans aucun fard ni artifice, comme un grand prince que je sais, lequel pourtant faisait coucher ses courtisanes ou dames dans des draps de taffetas noir bien tendus, toutes nues, afin que leur blancheur et délicatesse de chair parut bien mieux parmi ce noir et donnât plus d'ébat.<sup>1</sup>*

There can be no real doubt the fairest sight of any in the whole world would be that of a beautiful woman, all

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complete and perfect in her loveliness; but such an one is ill to find. Thus do we find it recorded of Zeuxis, the famous painter, how that being asked by sundry honourable ladies and damsels of his acquaintance to make them a portrait of the fair Helen of Troy and depict her to them as beautiful as folk say she was, he was loath to refuse their prayer. But, before painting the portrait, he did gaze at them all and each steadfastly, and choosing from one or the other whatever he did find in each severally most beautiful, he did make out the portrait of these fragments brought together and combined, and by this means did portray Helen so beautiful no exception could be taken to any feature. This portrait did stir the admiration of all, but above all of them which had by their several beauties and separate features helped to create the same no less than Zeuxis himself had with his brush. Now this was as good as saying that in one Helen 'twas impossible to find all perfections of beauty combined, albeit she may have been most exceeding fair above all women.

Be this as it may, the Spaniard saith that to make a woman all perfect, complete and absolute in loveliness, she must needs have thirty several beauties,<sup>3</sup> the which a Spanish lady did once enumerate to me at Toledo, a city where be very fair and charming women, and well instructed to boot. The thirty then are as followeth:

(Translated, for the reader's better comprehension:)

Three things white: skin, teeth and hands.

Three black: eyes, brows and lids.

Three red: lips, cheeks and nails.

Three long: body, hair and hands.

Three short: teeth, ears and feet.

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Three wide: chest or bosom, forehead and space betwixt the eyes.

Three narrow: mouth (upper and lower), girth or waist, and ankle.

Three big and thick: arm, thigh and calf.

Three long and fine: fingers, hair and lips.

Three small and delicate: breasts, nose and head.

Making thirty in all.

'Tis not inconceivable nor impossible but that all these beauties should be united all together in one and the same fair lady; but in that case she must needs be framed in the mould of absolute perfection. For indeed to see them all so combined, without there being a single one to carp at and find at fault is scarce possible. I do refer me to such as have seen beautiful women, or will see such anon, and who would fain be heedful in noting the same and appraising them, what they shall say of them. But though they be not complete and perfectly beautiful in all these points, yet will a beautiful woman alway be beautiful, an if she have but the half, and those the chief ones, of the parts and features I have named. For truly I have seen many which had more than the half, and were exceeding fair and very lovable. Just as a wood seemeth ever beautiful in Spring-tide, even though it be not filled with all the little pretty shrubs one might wish for. Yet are there plenty of fine, tall, spreading trees, which by their abundance may very well hide the lack of other smaller vegetation.

M. de Ronsard must pardon me, if he will. Never did his mistress, whom he hath represented as so very beautiful, really attain such perfection, nor any other lady he ever saw in his day or did describe. He calleth her his

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fair Cassandra, and sure I am she *was* fair, but he hath disguised her under a fictitious name. And the same is equally true of his Marie, who never bore other name but that, as it is of the first mentioned. Still it is allowed to poets and painters to say and do what pleaseth them,—for instance you will find in the *Orlando Furioso* wondrous fair beauties portrayed by Ariosto, those of Alcina and of many another fair one.

All this is well enough; but as I have heard a great personage of my acquaintance say, never could plain nature make so fair and perfect a woman as the keen and subtile imagination of some eloquent poet might featly describe, or the pencil and brush of some inspired painter represent. No matter! a man's eyes are ever satisfied to see a beautiful woman of fair, clear-complexioned and well-featured face. Yea! and though it be somewhat brown of hue, 'tis all one; the brunette is as good as the blonde many a time, as the Spanish girl hath it, *Aunque io sia morisca, no soy de menos preciar*,—"Brown though I be, I am not to be scorned for that." So the fair *Marfisa era brunetta alquanto*—"was something brown of face." Still must not the brown overset the white too much! Again, a beautiful countenance must be borne by a body fashioned and built to correspond. This doth hold good of little as well as big, but tall stature will ever take first place.

Well, as to seeking out suchlike exquisite points of beauty as I have just spoke of, and as poets have of old depicted, this we may very well dispense with, and find pleasure enough in our common and everyday beauties. Not that I would say common in any ill sense, for verily we have some so rare that, by my faith! they be better far

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than all those which your fantastic poets, and whimsical painters, and lyrical extollers of female charms could ever delineate.

Alas! the worst of it is this. Whenas we do see suchlike fair beauties and gracious countenances, we do admire and long for the fair bodies to match, for the love of the pretty faces. But lo! in some cases, when these come to be revealed and brought to light, we do lose all appetite therefor. They be so ugly, spoiled, blotched, disfigured and hideous, they do give the lie direct to the face. This is one of the ways we men are oft sore taken in.

Hereof we have a good example in a certain gentleman of the Island of Majorca, by name Raymond Lulle,<sup>4</sup> of a very good, wealthy and ancient family. This nobleman by reason of his high birth, his valour and merit, was appointed in the prime of his years to the governorship of the said island. While in this office, as will oft happen to Governors of provinces and cities, he did grow enamoured of a beautiful lady of the island, one of the most accomplished, beautiful and ready-witted women of those parts. Long and eagerly did he court her; and at length, seeing he was ever demanding the reward of his exertions, the lady after refusing as long as ever she could, did one day give him an assignation. This he did not fail to keep, nor did she; but presently appeared thereat, more beautiful than ever and more richly apparelled. Then just as he thought the gates of Paradise were opening for him, lo! she stepped forward and did show him her breast and bosom all covered over with a dozen plasters, and tearing these off one after other and angrily tossing them to the ground, did exhibit a horrid cancer to him. So with tears in her eyes, she did rehearse all her wretch-

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edness and her affection to him, and asked him,—was there then such mighty cause why he should be so much enamoured of her, making him so sad and dismal a discourse, that he did presently leave her, all overcome with ruth for the grief of this fair lady. Then later, after making supplication to God for her restoration to health, he did give up his office, and turned hermit.

Afterward, on returning from the Holy Wars, to the which he had vowed himself, he went to study at Paris under Arnaldus de Villanova, a learned philosopher; then after finishing his course there, he did withdraw into England, where the King of that day did welcome him with all the good will in the world for the sake of his deep learning, and seeing he did transmute sundry ingots and bars of iron, copper and tin, scorning the common, trivial fashion of transmuting lead and iron into gold. For he knew how more than one of his contemporaries could do this much as well as he, whereas he had skill to do both this and the other as well. But he was fain to perform a feat above the capacity of the rest of alchemists.

I have this tale from a gallant gentleman, which told me himself had it of the jurisconsult Oldrade. This author doth speak of Raymond Lulle in the Commentary he made on the Code *De Falsa Moneta* ("On False Coining"). Likewise he had it, so he said, on the authority of Carolus Bovillus,<sup>5</sup> a native of Picardy, who hath writ in Latin a life of this same Raymond Lulle.

This is how he did rid himself of his craving for the love of this fair lady. Other men, 'tis very like, had done differently, and would not have ceased to love, but shutting their eyes would e'en have taken what they did desire of her. This he might well enough have done, had he been



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so minded, seeing the part he did aim at was in no wise touched by any such disease.

I knew once a gentleman and a widow lady of the great world, which were not so scrupulous. For though the lady was afflicted with a great and foul cancer of the breast, yet he did not hesitate to wed her, nor she to take him, contrary to her mother's advice.

I knew likewise a very honourable gentleman, and a great friend of mine, who told me that one time being at Rome, he did chance to love a certain Spanish lady, one of the fairest was ever seen in that city. Now when he did go with her, she would never suffer him to see her, nor ever to touch her, but only with her clothes on. For, if ever he was for touching her, she would cry out in Spanish, *Ah! no me tocats, hareis me quosquillas*, that is to say, "Nay! do not touch me; you tickle me." But one morning, passing by her house and finding the door open, he goes boldly in. So having entered, without meeting either domestic, page or any living soul, he did penetrate to her bedchamber, and there found her so fast asleep he had leisure to behold and examine her at his ease, for that it was very hot weather. And he declared he did never see aught so fair as was her body, excepting only that he did discover how that, while the one thigh was fair, white, smooth and well-shapen, the other was all dried up, withered and shrunken, so that it looked no bigger than a young child's arm. Who so astonished as my friend? Who yet did not much compassionate her, and never after returned to visit her, nor had any subsequent dealings with her.

Many ladies there be which are not indeed thus shrunken by disease, yet are so thin, scraggy, withered and fleshless

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they can show naught but the mere skeleton of a woman. Thus did I know one, a very great lady, of whom the Bishop of Sisteron,<sup>6</sup> one of the witties men at Court, did by way of jest and gibe declare that it were better to sleep with a rat-trap of brass-wire than with her. In a like strain did another gentleman of the Court, when we were rallying him on having dealings with a certain great lady, reply, "Nay! but you are all wrong, for indeed I do love good flesh too well, and she hath naught but bones." Yet to look at these two ladies, so fair and beauteous of face, you would have supposed them both most fleshy and right dainty morsels.

A very high-born Prince of the great world did chance once to be in love with two very fair ladies at one and the same time, as doth often happen to the great, which do love change and variety. The one was exceeding fair, the other a brunette, but both the twain right handsome and most lovable women. So one day as he came away from visiting the dark one, her fair rival being jealous did say to him: "Ah, ha! so you've been flying for crow!" Whereto the Prince did make answer, something angered and ruffled at the word: "And when I am with you, my lady, what am I flying for then?" The lady straight made answer: "Why! for a phoenix, to be sure!" But the Prince, who had as ready a tongue as most, did retort: "Nay! say rather for a bird of Paradise, the which hath ever more feathers than flesh"; casting up at her by this word how that she was rather thin and meagre. The fact is she was too young a thing to be very fat, stoutness commonly coming only upon such women as are getting on in years, at the time when they do begin to lay on flesh and get bigger in limbs and all bodily parts.

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A certain gentleman did make a good reply to a great Lord I wot of. Both had handsome wives. The great Lord in question found the gentleman much to his taste, and most enticing. So one day he said to him, "Sir! I must e'en sleep with your wife." To this the gentleman, without a thought, for he was very ready of tongue, did answer, "I am willing enough, but on condition I sleep with yours." The Lord replied, "Why! what would you be at? I tell you, mine is so thin, you would not find her to your taste at all." To this the gentleman did retort, "Yea! by my faith! *je la larderai si menu que je la rendrai de bon gout.*"

Many women there be whose pretty, chubby faces make men fain to enjoy them yet when they do come to it, they find them so fleshless the pleasure and temptation be right soon done away. Among other defects, we do often find the *gridiron* form, as it called, the bones so prominent and fleshless they do press and chafe a man as sorely as though he had a mule's packsaddle on him. To remedy this, there be some dames are used to employ little cushions or pads, very soft and very delicately made, to bear the brunt and avoid chafing. I have heard speak of many which have used these in such wise that lovers not in the secret, when they do come to them, find naught but what is good to touch, and are quite persuaded 'tis their mistress's natural plumpness. For above the satin, they will wear thin, loose, white muslin. In this way the lover would leave the lady well pleased and satisfied, and himself deem her a right good mistress.

Other women again there be which have the skin all veined and marked like marble, or like mosaic work, dappled like a fawn's coat, itchy and subject to sores and

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farcies; in a word so foul and disfigured the sight thereof is very far from pleasant.

I have heard speak of a certain great lady, and I have known her myself and do know her still, who is all shaggy and hairy over the chest, stomach, shoulders and all down the spine, like a savage. I leave you to imagine the effect. The proverb hath it, no person thus hairy is ever rich or wanton; but verily in this case the lady is both the one and the other, I can assure you, and is well able to win admirers, to please their eye and gain their love.

Others' skin is like goose flesh or like a feathered starling, all rugged and cross-grained, and black as the devil. Others are blessed with great dangling bosoms, hanging down worse than a cow's giving its calf milk. Very sure am I these be not the fair breasts of Helen, who one day desiring to present to the Temple of Diana an elegant cup in fulfilment of a vow, and employing a goldsmith to make it for her, did cause him to model the same on one of her lovely breasts. He did make the goblet of white gold and in such wise that folk knew not which to admire the most, the cup itself or its resemblance to the beautiful bosom which he had taken for his pattern. It looked so round and sweet and plump, the copy only made men the more to desire the real thing. Pliny doth make especial mention thereof, in the place where he treateth of the existence of white gold. 'Tis very strange, but of white gold was this goblet made.

But who, I should like to know, would care to model golden cups on the great ugly breasts I speak of and have seen. We should be bound to give the goldsmith a big supply of gold, and then all our expense would but end in laughter and mockery, when we should cry, "Look! see

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our cup wrought on the model of so and so's breasts." Indeed they would not so much be like drinking cups at all as those great wooden puncheons, round and big-bellied, we see used for feeding swine withal.

Others there be the nipples of whose breasts are for all the world like a rotten pear. Others again whose bodies are all rough and wrinkled, that you would take them for old leathern game-bags, such as troopers and innkeepers carry. This cometh to women which have borne children, but who have not been properly seen to by the midwives. On the contrary there be others which have the same sweet and smooth and polished, and their bosom as plump and pretty as if they were still maids.

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Other women there be have their parts so pale and wan you would say they had the fever. Such do resemble some drunkards, which though they do drink more wine than a sucking pig, are yet always as pale as the dead. Wherefore do men call them traitors to their wine, as in contrast with such tipplers as are rosy-faced. In like fashion women that are pale in this region might very well be spoke of as traitors to Venus, were it not for the proverb which saith, "a pale whore and a red-faced scamp." Be this as it may, there is no doubt their being pale and wan is not agreeable to see; and is very far from resembling that of one of the fairest ladies of our time, and one that doth hold high rank (and myself have seen her), who they used to say did commonly sport three fine colours all together, to wit scarlet, white and black. For her mouth was brilliant and as red as coral, her hair pretty and curly and as black as ebony. So should it ever be, for indeed this is one of the chiefest beauties of

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a woman. Then the skin was white as alabaster, and was finely shadowed by this dark hair. A fair sight in truth!

I have heard Madame de Fontaine-Chalandray, known as *the fair Torcy*, relate how that her Mistress, Queen Eleanor, being robed and dressed, did appear a very beauteous Princess, and indeed there be many which have seen her looking so at our King's Court, and of a good noble figure. But being stripped, she did seem a very giantess in body, so long was it and big; whereas going lower down, she seemed but a dwarf, so short and small were her thighs and legs and all those parts.

Another great lady I have heard speak of was just the opposite. For whereas in body she looked a dwarf, so short and diminutive was it, for the rest down below she was a perfect giantess or colossus, so big, long and high-forked were her thighs and legs, though at the same time well-proportioned and fleshy.

There be many husbands and lovers among us Christians which do desire to be in all respects different from the Turks, which last take no pleasure in looking at women closely, because they say, as I have stated above, they have no shape. We Christians on the other hand do find, 'tis said, great contentment in regarding them carefully and do delight in such. Nay! not only do men enjoy seeing them, but likewise in kissing, and many ladies have shown their lovers the way. Thus a Spanish lady did reply to her lover on his quitting her one day with the words, *Bezo las manos y los pies, Señora; Senor, en el medio esta la mejore stacion.*

Other women have their thighs so ill proportioned, so unattractive looking and so badly made that they deserve not to be regarded or desired at all; and the same is true

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of their legs, which in some be so stout and heavy you would say the thick part thereof was a rabbit's belly when it is with young. In others again they be so thin and tiny and so like a stork's shanks, you might well deem them flute pipes rather than a woman's thighs and legs. What the rest is like, I will e'en leave you to imagine!

If I were to detail all the other beauties and deformities women are subject to, truly I should never have done. Now all I do say hereanent, or might say, is never of low-born or common women, but always of high-born, or at least well-born, ladies, which by their fairness of face do set the world on fire, but what of their person is hid doth but ill correspond.

### 2.



**I**T is no long while ago since in a certain district of Guyenne a married dame, of very good station and descent, had a strange adventure. As she was overlooking her children's studies, lo! their tutor, by some madness or frenzy of the brain, or maybe from a fierce access of love that did suddenly master him, did take a sword belonging to her husband and which lay on the bed, and did assail her so furiously as that he did transpierce her two thighs and her two labia from the one part to the other. Whereof she did after all but die, and would have right out but for the help of an excellent surgeon. She might well say of her poor body how that it had been in two divers wars and assailed in two different ways. The sight thereof afterward was, I imagine, scarce agreeable, seeing it was so scarred and its *wings* so torn. I say *wings*, for while

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the Greeks do call these labia *hymenaea*, the Latins name the same *alae* (wings), the moderns *labia*, or lips, and sundry other names. For truly there is no beast or bird, be it falcon, raw and untrained, like that of our young girls, or hawk, whether haggard or well practised, as of our married women and widows, that doth go more nimbly or hath the wing so active.

Other women, for dread of colds and catarrhs, do smother themselves in bed with cape and mufflers about the head, till upon my word they do look more like old witches than young women. Yet once out of bed, they are as smart as dolls. Others again be all rouged and painted up like images, fine enough by day; but a-nights the paint is off, and they are as ugly as sin.

It were well to examine suchlike dames before loving, marrying and enjoying the same, as Octavius Caesar was used to do. For along with his friends he did have sundry great ladies and Roman matrons stripped naked, and even vigin of marriageable age, and did examine them from head to foot, as if they had been slave-women and purchased serfs. The said examination was carried out by a certain horse-jockey or dealer by name Toranus, and according as this man did approve and find them to his liking, and unspoiled, would the Emperor take his pleasure with them.

This is precisely what the Turks do in their slave-market at Constantinople and other great towns, when they buy slaves, whether male or female.

Well! I will say no more of all this; indeed methinks I have already said over much. So this is how we be sore deceived in many sights we at the first imagine and believe very admirable. But if we be thus deceived in some good



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ladies, no less are we edified and well satisfied in other some, the which are so fair and sweet and clean, so fresh and plump, so lovable and desirable, in one word so perfect in all their bodily parts, that after them all sights in this world are but mean and empty. Whence it cometh there be men, which at such a sight do so lose their wits they must at once to work. Moreover 'tis often the case that such fair dames do find pleasure in showing their persons and do make no difficulty so to do, knowing themselves as they do without spot or blemish, to the end they may the better rouse temptation and concupiscence in our manly bosoms.

One day when we were together at the siege of La Rochelle, the late unfortunate Duc de Guise,<sup>1</sup> which did me the honour to hold me in affection, did come and show me some tables he had just filched from Monsieur the King's brother,<sup>2</sup> our General in that enterprise, from out the pocket of his breeches, and said thus: "Monsieur hath done me a displeasure and mocked me concerning my love for a certain lady. Well I would fain now take my revenge; look at these tables of his, and read what I have writ therein." With this he did hand me the tables, and I saw writ therein in his hand these four verses following, which he had just made up,—only that the word was set down outright in the first line:

Si vous ne m'avez congeue,  
Il n'a pas tenu à moy;  
Car vous m'avez bien vue nue,  
Et vous ay monstré de quoy.

(If you have not known me, this is no fault of mine. For indeed you have seen me naked, and I have shown you all you need.)

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After, he did tell me the lady's name, an unmarried girl to say truth, which I did already suspect. I said I was greatly surprised the Prince had never touched or known her, seeing his opportunities had been very ample, and he was credited by common report with being her lover. But he did answer, 'twas not so, and that it was solely by his own fault. To which I replied, "Then it must needs, my Lord, have been, either that at the time he was so weary and so sated in other quarters he was unable to bear the brunt, or else that he was so entranced with the contemplation of her naked charms that he did give never a thought to the active part."—"Well! it may be," the Prince answered, "he was good to do it; but anyhow this time he failed to take his opportunity. So I am having my fun of him, and I am going to put his tables back in his pocket, which he will presently examine, as is his wont, and must needs read what I have writ. And so I have my revenge." This he did, and never after did they twain meet without having a good laugh over it, and a merry passage of arms. For at that period was great friendship and intimacy betwixt these two, though after so strangely altered.

A lady of the great world, or to speak strictly a young maid, was held in much love and close intimacy by a certain great Princess. The latter was one time in her bed, resting, as was her wont, when a gentleman did come to see the damsel, one which was deep in love with her, albeit he had naught at all but his love to aid his suit. Then the fair lady, being so well loved and on such intimate terms with her Mistress the Princess, did come to her as she lay, and nimbly, without any warning whatsoever, did suddenly drag away all the coverings from off her, in

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such wise that the gentleman, by no means slow to use his eyes, did instantly cast them on her, and beheld, as he did tell me the tale afterward, the fairest sight ever he saw or is like to see,—her beautiful body, and all her lovely, white, exquisite person, that did make him think he was gazing on the beauties of Paradise. But this scarce lasted an instant; for the moment the bed-clothes were thrown off, the lady did snatch back the same, the girl having meanwhile run off. Yet as luck would have it, the more the fair lady did struggle to pull back the coverings, the more she did display her charms. This in no wise spoiled the sight and the pleasure the gentleman had therein, who you may be sure did not put himself about to help her,—he had been a fool so to do. However, presently in one way or another she did get her coverings over her again as before, chiding her favourite, but gently withal, and telling her she should pay for her pranks. The damsel, who had slipped away a little out of her reach, did only reply, “Madam, you did play me a trick a while ago; forgive me if that I have paid you back in your own coin.” And so saying, through the chamber-door and away! But peace was not long a-making.

Meanwhile the gentleman was so content with what he had seen, and so full of ecstasy, delight and satisfaction, I have heard him declare an hundred times over he did wish for naught else his life long but only to live and dream of this fair sight day by day. And in sooth he was right for to judge by the fair face that is without a rival and the beauteous bosom that hath so ravished mankind, there must indeed have been yet more exquisite dainties. And he did affirm that among these charms, the

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said lady did possess the finest figure, and the best developed, ever he did set eyes on. And it may well be so, for she was of a very rich and opulent figure, and this must needs be one of the chief of all a woman's beauties, and like a frontier fortress, one of the most necessary and indispensable.

When the said gentleman had told me all his tale, I could only bid him, "Live on, my friend, live on; with this divine sight to dream on and this happy contemplation, you should never die. And heaven grant me before I die, at least to see so fair a spectacle!"

The said gentleman did surely owe an eternal debt of gratitude to the damsel, and did ever after honour and love her with all his heart. And he did woo her right eagerly as lover, yet married her not at the last; for another suitor, richer than he, did carry her off, for truly 'tis the way of all women to run after the solid good things of life.

Sights like this be fair and right pleasant; yet must we beware they work not harm, as the view of the beauteous Diana in her nakedness did to poor Acteon, or yet another I am about to tell of.

A great King did in his day love fondly a very beautiful, honourable and great lady, a widow, so that men did esteem him bewitched of her charms. For little did he reckon of other women, or even of his wife, except only now and again, for this fair lady did always have the pick of the flowers of his garden. This did sorely grieve the Queen, for she knew herself as fair and lovable, as well deserving of loyal service and as worthy to enjoy such dainty morsels as the other. All this did both anger and surprise her much; wherefore having made her moan to

a great lady which was her chief favourite, she did plot with her and contrive if there were no way whereby she might e'en spy through some peep-hole the game her husband and the lady should play together. And accordingly she did contrive to make sundry holes in the ceiling of the said lady's chamber, for to see it all and the life they twain should lead with one another. So they did set them to view the sight; yet beheld naught but what was fair to see, for they did behold only a most beauteous, white and delicately made woman, tender and sweet, half muffled in her shift, entertaining of her lover with pretty, dainty caresses and most tricksome pranks, and her lover performing the like to her. Then presently the twain would lie and frolic together on the thick, soft carpet which was by the bed-side, so to escape the heat and the better to enjoy the cool. For it was then at the hottest of the year; and myself have also known another very great Prince which was used to take his amusement with his wife in this fashion, to avoid the heat brought on by the great warmth of the summer season, as himself did declare.

The unhappy Queen then, having seen and observed it all, did of very despite set to and weep, sob, sigh and make sore moan, thinking, and saying too, how that her husband did never the like with her, nor ever went through suchlike amorous follies as she had seen him perform with his mistress.

The other lady, which was with her, did what she could for to comfort her, and chided her for making so sad a moan, saying what was true enough, that as she had been so curious as to spy out such doings, she could scarce have expected else. To this the Queen did make no other

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answer but only this, "Alas! yes, I was wilful, and fain to see a thing I should never have beheld, for verily the sight thereof did hurt me very sore!" Natheless did she find some comfort anon and resolution of mind, and did leave off sorrowing.

I have heard yet another story of an honourable lady who when a girl was whipped by her mother twice every day, not that she had done aught wrong, but because, as she supposed, her mother did find a pleasure in seeing her so wriggle.

I have heard even a worse thing of a great Lord and Prince, more than eighty years ago, how that before going to cohabit with his wife, he was used to have himself whipped, not being able to be moved nor to do anything without this ridiculous remedy. I should greatly like some competent physician to tell me the reason hereof.

That great and distinguished author, Pico della Mirandola,<sup>3</sup> doth declare himself to have seen a gallant of his day, who the more he was thrashed with heavy blows of a stirrup-leather, the more was he thereby fierce after women. Never was he so valiant with them as after he had been so leathered, though when it was once well done, he was as fierce as any man. Truly here be some strange and terrible caprices! At any rate to see others whipped is a more agreeable sort of humour than this last!

8.



**W**HEN I was at Milan, I was one day told a diverting tale,—how the late Marquis de Pescaire,<sup>1</sup> dead no long while ago, erst Viceroy of Sicily, did fall deeply in love with a very fair lady. And so one morning, believing her husband was gone abroad, he set forth to visit her, finding her still a-bed; but in conversation with her, he did win naught else but only to see her, gaze at her under the clothes at his leisure, and touch her with his hand. While this was a-doing, lo! the husband did appear, a man which was not of the high consideration of the Marquis in any respect, and did surprise them in such sort that the Marquis had no time to get back his glove, the which was lost some way or another among the sheets, as doth frequently happen. Presently, after exchanging a few words with him, he did leave the chamber, conducted to the door by the husband. The latter on returning did, as chance would have it, discover the Marquis's glove lost among the sheets, the lady not having noticed the same. This he did take and lock up, and after, putting on a cold demeanour toward his wife, did long remain without sleeping with her or touching her at all. Wherefore one day she being alone in her chamber, did set hand to pen and write this quatrain following:

Vigna era, vigna son.  
Era podata, or piu non son;  
E non so per qual cagion  
Non mi poda il mio patron.

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So leaving these verses writ out on the table, anon the husband came and saw the lines; and so taketh pen and doth thus reply:

Vigna eri, vigna sei,  
Eri podata, e piu non sei.  
Per la granfa del leon,  
Non ti poda il tuo patron.

These he did leave likewise on the table. The whole was carried to the Marquis, who made answer:

A la vigna chez voi dite  
Io fui, e qui restai;  
Alzai il pampano; guardai la vite;  
Ma, se Dio m'ajuti, non toccai.

This in turn was shown to the husband, who satisfied with so honourable a reply and fair apology, did take his vine to him again, and did cultivate the same as industriously as heretofore; and never were husband and wife happier together.

I will now translate the verses from the Italian, that all may follow the sense:

"I was a vine, and am so still. I was well cultivated; but am so no more. And I know not for what cause my master doth not now cultivate me as before."

ANSWER:

"A vine thou wert, and art so still; thou wert well cultivated, and art so no more. Because of the lion's claw, for this cause thy master doth not now cultivate thee as before."



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### ANSWER OF THE MARQUIS:

"The vine you both do speak of I visited 'tis true, and tarried a space. I lifted the cluster, and looked at the grape; but, so God help me, touched not at all."

By the "lion's claw" the husband meaneth to signify the glove he had found lost between the sheets.

A good husband this, which did not take umbrage overmuch, and putting away his suspicions, did thus forgive his wife. And there is no doubt there be ladies which do take such a delight in themselves they do love to see themselves naked and gaze at their own beauty, in such wise that they are filled with ravishment beholding themselves so lovely, like Narcissus. What then, I ask, is it like we men should do, whenas we do see and gaze at the same?

Mariamn , the wife of Herod,<sup>2</sup> a fair and honourable lady, when that one day her husband was fain to sleep with her at full midday, and see openly all her charms, did refuse flatly, so Josephus doth record. Nor did he insist on his rights as a husband, as did a great Lord I knew once with his wife, one of the fairest of the fair, whom he did enjoy thus in open day, and did strip her stark naked, she protesting stoutly the while. After, he did send her women to her to dress her again, who did find her all in tears and filled with shame. Other dames on the contrary there be which do make no set scruples of the sort at making display of their beauty and showing themselves thus, the better to stir their lovers' passion and caprice, and draw them the more fondly to them. Yet will they in no wise suffer them to enjoy their most precious favour. Some indeed, ill liking to halt on so

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pleasant a road, soon go further; but others there be,—I have heard tell of not a few such,—which have long time entertained their lovers with such fair sights, and no more.

Happy they which have patience so to bide their time, without yielding overmuch to temptation. Yet must the man be fair bewitched of virtue who seeing a beautiful woman, doth give his eyes no gratification. So was Alexander the Great used to say at whiles to his friends how that the Persian maids did much hurt the eyes of such as did gaze at them. And for this cause, when he held prisoners the daughters of King Darius, he would never greet them but with downcast eyes, and likewise as seldom as ever he could, for fear he should have been overcome by the excellence of their beauty.

Not in those times only, but likewise in our own days, among all the women of the East, the Persian fair ones do bear the bell and prize of beauty, and fine proportion of bodily parts, and natural charm, as well as of becoming grace and fitness in dress and foot-gear—and above all others, they of the ancient and royal city of Shiraz.<sup>a</sup> These last be so commended for their beauty, fair skin, civility of manners and sweet grace, that the Moors do say in an old and well-known proverb, how that their Prophet Mahomet would never go to Shiraz, for fear, had he once set eyes on its lovely women, his soul after death would never have entered Paradise. Travellers which have been to that city and writ thereof, do say the same. And herein observe the hypocrisy of that same dissolute and rascal Prophet and his pretended continence; as if it were not to be found writ down, as Belon doth tell us, in an Arab work entitled “Of the Good Customs of Ma-

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homet," extolling the Prophet's corporeal vigour, how that he was used to boast of working and satisfying all his eleven wives which he had in a single hour, one after the other. To the deuce with the rascally fellow! Let us speak no more of him. When all is said and done, I had as lief never have named him at all!

I have heard this question raised concerning the behaviour of Alexander which I have described above and that of Scipio Africanus,—to wit which of the twain did merit the greater praise of continency?

Alexander, distrusting the strength of his chasteness, did refuse even to look at the fair Persian maids. Scipio, after the taking of New Carthage, did look at the beautiful Spanish girl his soldiers brought him and offered him as his share of the booty, which maid was so excellent in beauty and of so fair a time of life and flower of age, that wheresoever she did pass, she would brighten and charm the eyes of all that did behold her, and eke of Scipio himself. But he, after greeting her right courteously, did make inquiry of what city of Spain she was and of her family.

Then was he informed, among other things, how that she was betrothed to a young man, Alucius by name, Prince of the Celtiberians, to whom he did give her up and to her father and mother, without ever laying a hand on her. By which conduct he did lay the said lady, her relations and her betrothed, under such obligation that they did ever after show themselves most well affectioned to the city of Rome and the Commonwealth.

Yet who knoweth but in her secret soul this fair damsel had not rather have been assailed first of all by Scipio,—who, remember, was young, handsome, brave, valiant

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and victorious? It may well be that if some bosom friend, male or female of the girl's had asked her on her faith and conscience whether she had not wished it so, I leave it to the reader to suppose what she would have answered, and if at the least she would not have made some little sign or gesture signifying what her real wish had been. For think how the climate of her country and that western sun of Spain might well have made her hot and keen for love, as it hath many another fair lady of that land, as fair and gracious as she, in our own day, as myself have seen many an one. It can scarce be doubted then, if this fair and honourable maid had but been asked and courted of the young and handsome Scipio, but she would have taken him at the word, yea! even on the altar of her heathen gods!

Herein hath Scipio doubtless been commended highly of some for his noble gift of continence. Yet hath he been no less blamed of others; for wherein may a brave and valorous gallant better show forth the generosity of his heart towards a fair and honourable lady than by manifesting to her in deeds that he doth prize her beauty and highly admire it. Better this than treating her with that cold respect, that modesty and discretion, the which I have heard many good gentlemen and honest ladies call rather by the name of silliness and want of spirit than of virtue? Nay, verily! 'tis not such qualities at all a beautiful and worthy dame doth love in her heart of hearts, but rather good love and service that is prudent, discreet and secret. In one word, as an honourable lady did one day exclaim a-reading of this tale, Scipio was a fool, valiant and noble captain as he was, to go out of his way so to bind folk to him under obligation and to the Roman

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side by any such silly ways, when he might have done it just as well by other means more convenient. Beside, 'twas booty of War, whereof a man may take his joy and triumph as legitimately as of any other thing whatsoever in the world, or more so.

The great First Founder of Rome did not so, on occasion of the rape of the fair Sabine women, toward her which fell to his share. Rather he did to her according to his good pleasure, and paid her no cold respect whatever. This she did relish well enough and felt no grievance, neither she nor her companions, which did very soon make accord with their new husbands and ravishers. The women for their part did make no complaint like their fathers and mothers, which did rouse a fierce war of reprisals.

True it is, folk be of different sorts, and there be women *and* women. Some are loth to yield to any stranger in this sort, herein more resembling the wife of King Ortiagon, one of the Galatian monarchs of Asia Minor. She was of a perfect beauty, and being taken captive on the Kings' defeat by a Roman Centurion and solicited in her honour, she did stand firm in refusal, having a horror of yielding herself to him, a man of so low and base a station compared with herself. Wherefore he did have her by force and violence, whom the fortune and chance of War had given him by right of conquest to make his slave of. But 'twas no long while before he did repent him, and meet with vengeance for this offence; for the Queen, having promised him a great ransom for her liberty, and both being come to the appointed place for him to receive the money, she did have him slain, as he was a-counting of the gold, and did carry away it and his head to her

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husband. To this last she did confess freely how that the Roman had indeed violated her chastity, but that she had taken her vengeance of him therefor in this fashion,—the which her husband did approve and did highly honour her for her behaviour. And from that day forth, said the history, she did faithfully keep her honour unsullied to the last day of her life with all scrupulousness and seriousness. Anyway she did enjoy this good treat, albeit it did come from a low-born fellow.

Lucretia did otherwise, for she tasted not the pleasure at all, albeit solicited by a gallant King. Herein was she doubly a fool, first not to gratify him on the spot and readily enough, and secondly to kill herself.

To return once more to Scipio, 'twould seem he knew not yet the ways of War concerning booty and pillage. For by what I learn of a great Captain of our troops, there is no such dainty morsel for loot as a woman taken in War. The same good soldier did make much mock of sundry others his comrades, which were used to insist above all things, at assaults and surprises of towns, on the saving of the women's honour, as well as on divers other occasions and rencontres. This is sheer folly, seeing women do always love men of arms more than any others, and the very roughness of these doth give them the better appetite. So who can find aught to blame? The pleasure is theirs; their honour and their husbands' is in no way fouled; and where is the mighty harm and ruin? And yet another point,—they do oft by this means save their husbands' goods and lives,—as did Eunoé, wife of Bogud or Bocchus, King of Mauretania, to whom Caesar did give great possessions and to her husband likewise, not so much, we may well believe, for having followed his

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side, as Juba, King of Bithynia did that of Pompey, as because she was a beautiful woman, and Cæsar did have the enjoyment of her pleasant favours.

Many other excellent conveniences are there and advantages of these loves I must needs pass over. Yet, this same great Captain would exclaim, in spite of them all would other commanders, his comrades and fellows, obeying silly, old-fashioned laws of War, be fain to preserve the honour of women. But surely 'twere more meet first to find out in secrecy and confidence their real wishes, and then decide what to do. Or mayhap they be of the complexion of our friend Scipio, who was worse than the gardener's dog, which, as I have before said, will neither himself eat the cabbages in the garden, nor yet let other folk taste of them. This is the way he did treat the unhappy Massinissa, who had so oft times risked his life for him and for the Roman People, and so sore laboured, sweated and endeavoured, for to gain him glory and victory. Yet after all he did refuse him the fair Queen Sophonisba and did rob him of her, seeing he had chose her for his chiefest and most precious spoil. He did take her from him to send her to Rome, there to live out the rest of her days as a wretched slave,—if Massinissa had not found a remedy to save her from this fate. The Conqueror's glory had been fairer and nobler, if she had appeared at Rome as a glorious and stately Queen, and wife of Massinissa, so that folk would have said, as they saw her go by: "Look! one of the fair vestiges of Scipio's conquests." Surely true glory doth lie much rather in the display of great and noble things than of mean and degraded.

In fine, Scipio, in all this discussion, was shown to have committed grievous faults, whether because he was an

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enemy of the whole female sex, or as having been altogether impotent to satisfy its wishes. And yet 'tis said that in his later years he did engage in a love intrigue with one of his wife's maids,—the which the latter did very patiently endure, for reasons that might easily be alleged to account for the said complaisancy.

### 4.



HOWEVER, to return from the digression I have just been indulging in and come back into the direct course of my argument, I do declare as my last word in this discourse, that nothing in all the wide world is so fair to see and look upon as a beautiful woman splendidly attired or else daintily disrobed and laid upon a fair bed, provided always she be sound and sweet, without blemish, blot or defect, as I have afore said.

King Francis I. was used to say, no gentleman, howsoever magnificent, could in any better wise receive a great Lord, howsoever mighty and high-born, at his mansion or castle, than by offering to his view on his first arrival a beautiful woman, a fine horse and a handsome hound. For by casting his gaze now on the one, now on the other and presently on the third, he would never be a-weary in that house, having there the three things most pleasant to look upon and admire, and so exercising his eyes right agreeably.

Queen Isabelle of Castile was wont to say, there were four things did give her very great pleasure to behold: *Hombre d'armas en campo, obispo puesto en pontifical, linda dama en la cama, y ladron en la horca*,—"A man



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of arms in the field, a Bishop in his pontificals, a fair lady in her bed, and a thief on the gallows."

I have heard the late Cardinal de Lorraine, a short while since deceased, relate how on the occasion of his going to Rome to the Court of Pope Paul IV., to break off the truce made with the Emperor, he did pass through Venice, where he was very honourably received, we cannot doubt, seeing he was so high in the favour of so high and puissant a King. The most noble and magnificent Senate of that city did set forth in a body to meet him. Presently, passing up the Grand Canal, where every window of all the houses was crowded with all the fairest ladies of the place, who had assembled thither to see the state entry, there was a certain great man of the highest rank which did discourse to him on the business of the State, and spake at length of great matters. But after a while, seeing the Cardinal was for ever casting his eyes and fixing them on all these beautiful dames, he said to him in his native Venetian dialect: "My Lord Cardinal, I think you heed me not, and you are right enough. For surely 'tis much more pleasure and diversion to watch these fair ladies at the windows and take delight of their beauty than to listen to the talk of a peevish old man like me, even though he should be talking of some great achievement and success to redound to your advantage." On this the Cardinal, who had no lack of ready wit and memory, did repeat to him word for word all he had said, leaving the good old man excellently well pleased with him, and full of wonder and esteem, seeing that for all his feasting of his eyes on the fair ladies of Venice, he had neither forgot nor neglected aught of all he had said to him.

Any man which hath seen the Court of our French

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Kings, Francis I., Henri II., and other Sovereigns his sons, will freely allow, whosoever he be and though he have seen all the world, he hath never beheld aught so fair and admirable as the ladies which did frequent their Court and that of the Queens and Princesses, their wives, mothers and sisters. Yet a still fairer sight would he have seen, say some, if only the grandsire of Master Gonin had yet been alive, who by dint of his contrivances, illusions, witchcrafts and enchantments could have shown the same all undressed and stript naked, as they say he did once in a private company at the behest of King Francis. For indeed he was a man very expert and subtile in his art of sorcery; whose grandson, the which we have ourselves seen, knew naught at all in this sort to be compared with him.

This sight I ween would be as agreeable and diverting as was of yore that of the Egyptian women at Alexandria, on occasion of the reception and welcoming of their great god Apis, to greet whom they were used to go forth in great state, and lifting their gowns, bodices and shifts, and tucking up the same as high as ever they could, did show the god themselves right out. If any will see the tale, let him read Alexander ab Alexandro, in the 6th book of his *Dies Joviales*. I think such a sight must indeed have been a right agreeable one, for in those days the ladies of Alexandria were exceeding fair, as they are still to this day.

Doubtless the old and ugly women did in like wise; but there! what matter? The eye should never strain but after what is fair and comely, and avoid the foul and unlovely all it may.

In Switzerland, men and women do meet promiscuously

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in the baths, hot and cold, without doing any dishonest deed, but are satisfied with putting a linen cloth in front of them. If this be pretty loose, well! we may see something, mayhap agreeable or mayhap not, according as our companion is fair or foul.

Before ending this part of my discourse, I will add yet one word more. Just think again to what sore temptations were exposed the young lords, knights and nobles, plebeians and other men of Rome, and what delectation of the eye they did enjoy in ancient times on the day when was kept the feast of Flora at Rome. This Flora, 'tis said, was the most engaging and successful courtesan that did ever practise harlotry at Rome, or in any other city. And what did yet more recommend her herein was the fact she was of a good house and noble lineage; for dames of such high sort do naturally please the more, and to go with such doth afford greater gratification.

Thus the lady Flora had this excellence and advantage over Laïs, seeing the latter would give herself to any like a common strumpet, but Flora to great folk only. And indeed she had this writing put up at the entering in of her door, "Kings, Princes, Dictators, Consuls, Censors, Pontifices, Quæstors, Ambassadors, and other the like great Lords, enter; but no other."

Laïs did ever ask payment beforehand, but Flora never, saying she did act so with great folk to the end they might likewise act by her as great and illustrious men should, and also that a woman of much beauty and high lineage will ever be esteemed as she doth value herself. So would she take naught but what was freely given her, declaring every gentle dame should do pleasure to her lover for

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love's sake, and not for avarice, for that all things have their price save and except true love alone.

In a word, she did in her day so excellently and sweetly practise love, and did win her such gallant lovers, that whenever she did quit her lodging now and again to walk abroad in the city, there was talk of her enough to last a month, as well for her beauty, her fair and rich attire, her gallant bearing and engaging mien, as for the ample suite of courtiers and lovers and great lords which went with her, and did follow and attend her like veritable slaves,—an honour she did take with no ill grace. And ambassadors from foreign lands, when they did return to their own country, would ever find more delight in tales of the beauty and wondrous excellence of the divine Flora than in describing the greatness of the Roman State. And above all would they extol her generosity, a thing contrary to the common bias of suchlike dames; but then she was out of the common altogether, seeing she was of noble origin.

Eventually she did die so rich and opulent that the worth of her money, furniture and jewels were enough to rebuild the walls of Rome, and furthermore to free the State of debt. She did make the Roman People her heir in chief; and in memory thereof was erected at Rome a very sumptuous Temple, which was called from her name the Florianum.

The first Festival ever the Emperor Galba did celebrate was that of the fond Flora, at the which 'twas allowed all Roman men and women to do every sort of debauchery, dissoluteness, abomination and extravagance they chose and could imagine. Indeed *she* was deemed the most re-

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ligious and most gallant dame, which on that day did best play the dissolute, debauched and abandoned wanton.

Think of it! Never a *fiscaigne* ('tis a lascivious dance the loose women and Moorish slave-girls dance on Sundays at Malta publicly in the open square), nor saraband did come near these Floralia for naughtiness; and never a movement or wanton posture or provocative gesture or lascivious twist and twirl did these Roman dames omit. Nay! the more dissolute and extravagant the figures she did devise, the more gallant and gay was deemed the performer; for the Romans did hold this creed that the more wanton and lecherous the gesture and carriage wherewith a woman did approach the Temple of this goddess, the more like was she to win the same charms and opulence Flora herself had enjoyed.

Verily a fine creed, and a fine mode of solemnizing a festival! but remember they were but Pagans. Well! little doubt there was never a sort of naughtiness they did fail to bethink them of, and that for long beforehand these worthy dames would be a-studying of their lessons, just as our own countrywomen will set to work to learn a ballet, and would devote all their heart and soul to these things. Then the young men, and the old ones too, would be no less eager to look on and behold their quaint grimacings and wanton tricks. If such a show could be held in our days, folks would be right glad to profit by the same in every sense; and to be present at such a sight, the public would verily crowd itself to death!

Further details let each imagine for himself; I leave the task to our merry gallants. Let any that is fain, read Suetonius, as also Pausanias in Greek and Manilius in Latin, in the books they have writ concerning illustrious,

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amorous and famous ladies, and he will learn the whole in full.

This one more story, and then an end. We read how the Lacedæmonians set forth once to lay siege to Messené; but the Messenians were beforehand with them. For they did sally out upon the enemy, some of them, whilst the rest did make all haste and away to Lacedæmon, thinking to surprise their town and pillage it, while the Spartans were occupied before Messené. They were however valorously repelled and driven off by the women which had been left behind. Hearing of their design, the Lacedæmonians did turn about and make their way back toward their own city. But from a long way off they did make out their women all armed, who had already driven off the enemy whose attack on the city they had dreaded. Then did the said women straightway inform them of all, and relate their victory,—the news whereof did so delight them they did set to on the spot to kiss, fondle and caress the victors. In such wise that, forgetting all shame and without even waiting to take off their harness, neither men nor women, they did gallantly do the thing with them on the very spot where they had met them first. Then were things to be seen not usual in War, and a right pleasant rattle and tinkle of arms and armour and the like to make itself heard. In memory whereof they did have built a temple and statue to the goddess Venus, under the title of the *Armed Venus*, unlike all other images of the goddess, which do always represent her naked. A merry tale of a merry encounter, and a happy idea to depict Venus armed, and call her by that title!

'Tis no uncommon sight among men of arms, especially at the taking of towns by assault, to see soldiers fully

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armed enjoying women, having neither the time nor patience to disarm before satisfying their lust and appetite, so fierce and eager are they. But to see soldier and woman both armed in cohabitation together is a thing seldom seen.

Well, well! enough! we must needs make an end,—albeit I could have filled out this discourse to more ample length by not a few other examples, had I not feared to seem over wanton, and incur an ill repute of naughtiness.

However, after so much praise of fair ladies, I do feel me bound to repeat the words of a Spaniard, who one day wishing ill to a woman, did describe her in very proper terms to me thus:

*Señor, vieja es como la lampada azeytunada d'iglesia, y de hechura del armario, larga y desvayada, el color y gesto como mascara mal pintada, el talle como una campana o mola de el andar y vision d'una antigua fantasma de la noche, que tanto tuviese encontrar-la de noche, como ver una mandragora. Iesus! Iesus! Dios me libre de su mal encuentro! No se contenta de tener en su casa por huesped al provisor del obispo, ni se contenta con la demasiada conversacion del vicario ni del guardian, ni de la amistad antigua del dean, sino que agora de nuevo ha tomado al que pide para las animas del purgatorio, para acabar su negra vida;—*“Sir! look at her! She is like an old, greasy Church lamp. Form and shape are those of a great aumry, all mis-shapen and ill made; complexion and features like a badly drawn mask; figure as shapely as a monastery bell or a great millstone. Her face is like an old idol; her look and gait like an antic ghost that walks by night. I should be as sore afraid to meet her in the dark as to face a horrid mandrake. The good

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Jesus keep me from such an encounter! The Bishop's Ordinary is her constant guest, but she is not satisfied; the garrulous Vicar and the good old Dean are her oldest friends, but she is not content. She must needs entangle now the Pardoner for poor souls in Purgatory, to complete the infamy of her black and odious life."

Observe how the Spaniard, which hath so well described the thirty beauties of a fair lady (have I not quoted them above, in this same Discourse?), can, when he so wills, abuse the sex with the like gusto.





### THIRD DISCOURSE

*Concerning the beauty of a fine leg, and the virtue  
the same doth possess.*

1.



**A**MONG many and sundry beauties the which I have at divers times known us courtiers to praise, and which are right well adapted to attract love, one of the highest esteemed is a fine leg on a fine woman. Many fair ladies have I known take great pride therein, and use great pains to have and to keep the same beautiful. Amongst others I have heard tell of a noble Princess of the great world, and one that I did myself know, which did cherish one of her ladies above all the rest, and did favour her beyond all, for this only because she could draw on her mistress' hose so close and tight, and arrange them so cleverly to fit the leg, and fasten the garter so prettily,—better than any other. For this only reason she gat great preferment at her hands, and even did win considerable wealth. Now in view of all this care she took to keep her leg in such good trim, we may be very sure 'twas not to hide the same under her petticoats or under skirts or frock, but to make display thereof at whiles with fine drawers of cloth of gold and silver, or other the like rich

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stuff, very prettily and daintily made, which she did commonly wear. For verily a woman taketh not such pleasure in her body without being fain to give others a share also in the sight, yea! and the enjoyment thereof.

Moreover this lady could not make excuse, saying 'twas all done to pleasure her husband, as the most part of women, and even of old women, will ever declare, whenas they do make themselves so seductive and gay, though they be quite elderly; for she was a widow. True it is in her husband's lifetime she had done the same, and would not leave off the habit afterward, merely because she had lost him.

I have known many fair and honourable ladies, both wives and maids, which are no less painstaking thus to keep their fine legs in well cared for, seemly and attractive guise. And very right they be so to do; for truly there is more wanton seduction doth lie therein than you would readily suppose.

I have heard speak of a very great lady, of the days of King Francis, and a right fair dame, who having broken a leg and had the same set, did after find 'twas ill done, and the limb was left all twisted. So stout of heart was she, that she did make the bone-setter break it afresh, for to restore it to its right shape as before, and make it as fine and straight as ever. Hereat a certain lady did express no little surprise; but another fair lady, and a well experienced one, did answer thus and said, "Ah! I see plainly you know not what amorous virtue a fine leg hath in it."

I knew in former days a very fair and honourable damsel of the great world, who being much in love with a great Lord, for to attract him to her and by way of try-

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ing some good device to win him to her,—a design wherein she could never succeed, one day being in a wooded avenue and seeing him approach, did make a pretense as though her garter were coming down. So withdrawing a little on one side, she did lift up her leg, and began to pull up her stocking and re-adjust her garter. The great lord did note it all well, and found her leg an exceeding fine one. Indeed he did lose his head so completely that this sight of her did work more effect on him than ever her face had done, for he did think to himself how that two such fine columns must needs support a very fine building. And later he did admit as much to his mistress, who afterward did with him as she would. A noteworthy device truly, and a pretty bit of love practice!

I have heard speak likewise of a fair and honourable lady, and one especially witty and of a gay good humour, who one day, when her chamber valet was a-drawing on of her hose, did ask him if this did not put him in heat, temptation and concupiscence; <sup>1</sup> nay! she put it yet more plainly, and said the plain word right out. The valet, thinking to please and for the respect he bare his mistress, did answer her, No!—At this she did of a sudden lift her hand and gave him a sound cuff on the head, crying out, “Begone with you! you shall never serve me more. You are a simpleton, and I do give you notice from this day.”

There be many young ladies’ valets nowadays which be not so self-restrained at the rising of their mistresses from bed and in the dressing of them and putting on of their footgear. Moreover many a gentleman would have found it hard to act thus, seeing so fair a treat spread out before his eyes.

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'Tis not only in our own day men have esteemed the beauty of fine legs and pretty feet (for 'tis one and the same thing; but in the time of the old Romans likewise we do read how Lucius Vitellius, father of the Emperor Vitellius, being very sore smit with love for Messalina and desiring to be in favour with her husband by her means, did one day beseech her to do him the honour of granting him a boon. The Empress asked him, "What boon?"—" 'Tis this, Madam," he replied, "that you be pleased one day to suffer me to take off your shoes." Messalina, who was ever full of courtesy for her subjects, could not refuse him this favour. Then he, after removing her shoes, did keep one of them, and bore the same always about with him betwixt his shirt and his skin, kissing it as oft as ever he had opportunity, in this wise worshipping his lady's pretty feet in the guise of her slippers, forasmuch as he could not have at his disposal the foot itself nor the fine leg appertaining thereto.

Then you have that English Lord in the *Cent Nouvelles* of the Queen of Navarre, which did in like wise wear his mistress' glove by his side, and that so richly adorned. Again I have known many gentlemen which, before donning of their silk stockings, would beg their fair ladies and mistresses to try on the same and wear them the first a week or ten days, more or less; after which themselves would wear them in great respect and high content of mind and body.

I knew once a Lord of the great world, who being at sea with a very great lady and one of the fairest of womankind, had the happiness, seeing he was travelling with her through his country and as her women were all ill of seasickness and so in very ill case to serve her,

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to be obliged to put her to bed with his own hands every night and get her up in the morning. But in so doing and in putting on of her footgear and taking off the same, he did grow so much enamoured as to be well nigh desperate, albeit she was his near kinswoman. For verily the temptation herein was too exceeding great, and there doth not exist the man so mortified in spirit but he is something moved by the same.

We do read of the wife of Nero, Poppæa Sabina, which was the favourite of all his wives and mistresses, how that, beside being the most lavish of women in all sorts of superfluities, ornaments, embellishments, gawds and costly weeds, she did wear shoes and slippers all of pure gold. This luxury was not like to make her hide her foot and leg from Nero, her cuckold mate; nor yet did he enjoy the sole delight and pleasure of the sight, for there was many another lover had the same privilege. Well might she display this extravagance for herself, seeing she was used to have her horses' hoofs, which did draw her chariot, shod with shoes of silver.

Saint Jerome doth reprove in very severe terms a lady of his time which was over careful of the beauty of her leg, using these exact words: "With her little brown boot, well fitting and well polished, she doth decoy young men, and the tinkle of her shoe-buckles is a snare unto them." No doubt this was some dainty fashion of foot-gear in vogue in those days, that was over luxurious and ill becoming to modest women. The wearing of foot-gear of the sort is to this present day in use among Turkish ladies, and those the best-born and most virtuous.

I have seen the question raised and discussed which is the more seductive and alluring, the naked leg, or the leg

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covered and stockinged? Many hold there is naught like the natural article, when 'tis well made and perfectly turned, according to the points of beauty enumerated by the Spaniard I did quote from a little above, and is white, fair and smooth, and appropriately displayed in a fine bed. For if it be otherwise and a lady were fain to show her leg all bare in walking and so on, and with shoes on her feet, albeit she should be the most magnificently dressed out possible, yet would she never be deemed becomingly apparelled. Nor would she really and truly look so fair as one that should be properly equipped with pretty hose of coloured silk or else of white thread, such as be made at Florence for summer wear, and which I have often seen our ladies wearing in former times, before the great vogue we do now see of silk stockings. But the hose must ever be drawn close and stretched as tight as a drum and so fastened with clasps or otherwise, according to the preference and good pleasure of the wearer. Further must the foot be fitted with a pretty white shoe, or a slipper of black velvet or velvet of some other colour, or else a neat little high-heeled shoe, cut to perfection, such as I have seen a certain very noble lady of the great world wear, of such sort that naught could well be better or more dainty.

Wherein again the beauty of the foot must be considered. If this be too large, 'tis not pretty; but an if it be too tiny, it doth give a naughty hint and ill notion of its wearer. Rather it should be of a middling size, as I have seen sundry which have been exceeding appetizing, above all when their owners did thrust the same half in, half out, and just show them beneath their petticoat, and make them shift and quiver in little tricksome, wanton

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movements, being shod with a pretty little high-heeled shoe, thinly soled, or else a white slipper, pointed, not square-toed in front; but the white is the most daintiest. But these little high-heeled shoes and pumps be for big, tall women, not for the short and dwarfish ones, which do have their great horse-shoes with soles two feet thick. One had as lief as these see a giant's club on the swing, or a fool's bawble.

Another thing a woman should beware of is the disguising her sex and dressing herself as a boy, whether for a masquerade or for any other occasion. For so attired, though she have the finest leg in the world, yet doth she look ill-shapen in that part, seeing all things have their proper setting and suitable array. Thus in falsifying of their sex, they do altogether disfigure their beauty and natural grace.

This is why 'tis not becoming for a woman to dress as a boy for to display her charms to the more advantage, —unless indeed it be merely to don a dainty, gallant cap with the Guelf or Ghibelline feather stuck therein, or perched above the brow, in such wise to be distinctively neither male nor female, after the fashion our ladies have of late adopted. Yet even this doth not suit all women equally well; the face must be saucy and of just the right expression to carry it off, as we have seen in the case of our Queen Marguerite of Navarre. Her it did suit so well that, seeing her face only when she was so bedecked, no man could tell which sex she came the nearer to, whether she more looked the handsome boy or the beautiful woman she really was.

This doth remind me of another lady of the great world, and one I knew, which wishing to imitate the same

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mode when about twenty-five years of age, and altogether over tall and big statured, a great masculine looking woman and but lately come to Court, and thinking to play the gallant dame, did one day appear so attired in the ball-room. Nor did she fail to be much stared at and rallied not a little on her costume. Even the King himself did pronounce his judgement thereon, for indeed he was one of the wittiest men in his realm, and declared she did resemble a mountebank's wench, or still better one of those painted figures of women that are imported from Flanders and set up in front of the chimney-pieces in inns and taverns with German flutes at their lips. In fact he went so far as to have her told that if she did appear any more in that dress and get-up, he would order her to bring her flute with her for to play a merry greeting to the noble company withal and divert them with her music. Such cruel sport did he make of her, as well because the said head-gear did so ill suit her as for a grudge he had against her husband.

So we see such masquerading doth not suit all ladies alike. For when this same Queen of Navarre, the fairest woman in all the world, was pleased to adopt a further disguise beyond the cap, she did never appear so fair as she really was, nor ever would have. And indeed what shape could she have taken more beauteous than her own, seeing there is none better she could have borrowed from any in all the world? And if she had chose to show her leg, the which I have heard sundry of her women describe as the finest and best ever known, otherwise than in its proper form, and appearing well and fitly stockinged and shod below her fine clothes, never would it have been deemed so handsome as it was. Thus with a due regard



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to surroundings doth it behove fair ladies to show and make display of their beauties.

2.



I HAVE read in a Spanish book entitled *El Viage del Principe*, or "The Prince's Voyage," to wit that which the King of Spain<sup>1</sup> did make in his Province of the Low Countries, in the time of the Emperor Charles his father, how among other fine receptions he did meet with among his rich and wealthy cities of those parts, was one of the Queen of Hungary in the fair city of Bains, which did give rise to a proverb, *Mas brava que las fiestas de Bains*,—"Finer than the festivities of Bains."

Among other magnificent shows was this. During the siege of a sham castle that was erected, and besieged in form as a place of war, (a description of the same is given elsewhere in my Works), she did one day give an entertainment, notable among all others, to the Emperor her good brother, the Queen Eleanor her sister, the King her nephew, and all the Lords, knights and ladies of the Court. Toward the end of the show did appear a lady, accompanied by six Oreads, or mountain nymphs, clad in the antique mode, in the costume of nymphs of the Virgin Huntress, all attired in cloth of silver and green and crescents on their brow all beset with diamonds in such wise that they seemed to imitate the brilliancy of the moon, and carrying each her bow and arrow in hand, and rich quivers at their side, their shoes in like wise of cloth of silver, well fitting and well put on so as that they could not be better. And so caparisoned they did enter

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the great hall, leading their dogs after them, and did present to the Emperor and laid on the table before him all sorts of game in pasties, the which they had taken in their hunting.

Thereafter did come Pales, the goddess of shepherds, with six nymphs of the meadows, clad all in white of cloth of silver, with furniture of the same on their heads all beset with pearls, wearing likewise hosen of the same material with white slippers; and these did bring all sorts of milk confections, and laid the same before the Emperor.

Then for the third band, came the goddess Pomona, with her Naiads, or water nymphs, which did bring the last offering of fruits. And this goddess was the daughter of Donna Beatrix Pacecho, Comtesse d'Autremont, lady-in-waiting of Queen Eleanor, a child at that time of some nine years old. She it is that is now wife of the Admiral de Chastillon, he having wedded her as his second wife. This pretty maid and goddess did bring in, she and her companions, all sorts of fruits such as could be found at that season, for it was Summer time, the richest and rarest procurable, and did present the same to the Emperor with a set speech so eloquent, so fine and pronounced with so sweet a grace that she did win the great love and admiration of the Emperor and all the company there assembled, her youth being taken in account, that from that day forward 'twas foretold of all that she would be what she is to-day, a fair, wise, honourable, virtuous, clever and witty lady.

She was similarly attired as a nymph like the rest of her companions, all being clad in cloth of silver and white, with hosen and shoes of the same, and their heads decked with much wealth of jewels. But these were all

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emeralds this time, to represent in part the colour of the fruit they did offer. And besides the gift of fruit, she did make one to the Emperor and the King of Spain of a Tree of Victory all enamelled in green, the boughs laden with great pearls and precious stones, right rich to behold and of inestimable worth; also to the Queen Eleanor a fan, with a mirror in the mid thereof, the whole garnished with jewels of great price.

Verily this Princess and Queen of Hungary did show right well that she was an honourable lady in all points, and that her address and tact was as admirable as was her skill in the art of war. And indeed, by all I have heard said, the Emperor her brother did feel no little content and comfort to have so honourable a sister and so worthy of him.

Now have I laid myself open to blame and might fairly enough be asked why I have made this digression in the course of my Discourse. 'Tis to point out how that all these maids that did represent these characters had been chose out and selected as being the fairest among all the suite of the Queens of France and of Hungary and of Madame de Lorraine,—being Frenchwomen, Italians, Flemish, German and Lorrainers. In all the number was no defect of beauty; and God knoweth if the Queen of Hungary had been painstaking and exact to choose such as were fairest and most graceful.

Madame de Fontaine-Chalandry, who is yet alive, could give us good assurance of this, who was at the time maid of honour of the Queen Eleanor, and one of the fairest. She was known also by the name of "the fair Torcy," and hath told me the tale of all these doings. And I have it for sure both of her and from other

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quarters too how that all the lords, gentlemen and knights of that Court did take their diversion in looking at and examining fine legs, limbs and pretty little feet of these ladies. For attired thus as nymphs, they were dressed in short gowns, and could make a very engaging display, more enticing even than their pretty faces, which admirers could see every day, whereas 'twas not so with their other beauties. And so sundry courtiers did grow more enamoured by the sight and display of these same fine legs, than ever of their pretty faces, seeing that atop of such fine columns there be commonly found fine cornices with their friezes, fine architraves, and rich capitals, smoothly polished and curiously carved.

So must I be allowed yet another digression, and to say my say as I please, now we be upon the subject of shows and suchlike representations. Almost at the same moment as these noble festivities were a-doing in the Low Countries, and above all at Bains, on occasion of the reception of the King of Spain, was made the state entry of King Henri, on his way back from visiting his province of Piedmont and his garrisons there, into Lyons, which was of a surety one of the finest and most triumphant ever known, as I have heard honourable ladies and gentlemen of the Court declare, which were there at the time.

Well! if this show and representation of Diana and her hunt was found admirable at these Royal festivities of the Queen of Hungary, another was contrived at Lyons which was different again and still more lifelike. For as the King was marching along, and just about to reach a grand obelisk of Classic fashion, on the right hand of his way he did actually find a meadow by the side of the high road surrounded by a wall something

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more than six feet high, and the said meadow within filled up with earth to the same height. This had been regularly filled up with trees of moderate growth, planted in between with thick undergrowth and many shrubs and smaller brushwood, as well as with a good supply of fruit trees. In this miniature forest did disport them many little stags all alive, and fawns and roebuck, though of course tame ones. Presently his Majesty did hear sundry hunting-horns and trumpets sound softly; and thereupon instantly did behold through the aforesaid wood Diana a-hunting with her companions and forest maids, holding in her hand a richly dight Turkish bow, and her quiver hanging at her side, attired in the costume of a nymph, after the fashion the remains of Antiquity do yet show us. Her body was clad in a short doublet with six great round scallops of black cloth of gold, strewn with silver stars, the sleeves and body of crimson satin with borderings of gold, tucked up to mid thigh, displaying her fine limb and pretty leg, and her sandals of the antique shape, set with pearls embedded in embroideries. Her hair was interlaced with heavy strings of rich pearls, with wealth of precious stones and jewels of price; while above the brow a little silver crescent was set, blazing with tiny little diamonds. For gold would not have been so well, nor so true a representation of the natural crescent, which is clear and silvery.

Her companions were accoutred in divers sorts of costumes of lustring striped with gold, both wide and narrow stripes, always in the antique mode, as well as sundry other colours of an antique sort, varied and intermingled as well for curiousness of effect as for gaiety of appearance. Hosen and shoes were of satin; their heads decked

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out in like wise in the character of nymphs, with many pearls and precious stones.

Some were leading in leash sleuth-hounds, small grey-hounds, spaniels and other dogs by cords of silk white and black, the King's colours which he bare for the love of a lady named Diana whom he loved; others did go along with and encourage the running dogs, that were in full cry. Others again did carry little darts of hard wood, the point gilded, and having pretty little hanging tassels of black and white silk, and hunting-horns and trumpets mounted in gold and silver hanging in bandoleers with cords of thread of silver and black silk.

And so soon as ever they did perceive the King, a lion did sally forth of the wood, which was tamed and trained long before for this, and did throw himself at the feet of the said goddess, giving her welcome. So she, seeing him so mansuete and gentle, did take him by a great rope of silver cord and black silk, and on the instant did present the same to the King. Thus coming forward with the lion to the edge of the wall of the meadow bordering the road, and within a pace or so of his Majesty, she did make offer to him of the beast in a rhymed stanza, of the sort composed in those days, yet not so ill wrought either or ill sounding. And according to this rhyme, the which she did pronounce with a very good grace and sweetness, under the guise of the lion so gentle and well behaved she did offer him his town of Lyons, now all gentle, well behaved and brought under to his laws and orders.

All this being said and done with a very sweet grace, Diana and all her companions did make him an humble reverence; whereupon having looked at them all with a

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favourable eye and greeted them graciously, signifying he had found their hunting shows right agreeable and thanking them heartily, he did so part from them and went on his way to his entry into the city. Now observe that this same Diana and all her nymphs were the most highly thought on and fairest wives, widows and maids of Lyons, where is no lack of such, which did play their mystery so well and in such engaging sort that the most part of the Princes, Lords, gentlemen and courtiers were exceedingly delighted thereat. I leave you to judge whether they had not good cause so to be.

Madame de Valentinois, known as Diane de Poitiers, the King's mistress, in whose name this hunting was made, was not less well content, and did like well all her life long the good town of Lyons. And indeed she was their neighbour, by reason of the Duchy of Valentinois which is quite close to that place.

Well! as we are on the subject of the pleasure to be derived from the sight of a fine leg, we may be assured, as I have heard say, that not the King only, but all these Court gallants, did find a marvellous great pleasure in contemplating and gazing at those of these fair nymphs, so gaily attired and high kilted as that they did give as much,—or more,—temptation to ascend to a yet higher level, as admiration and reason to approve so pretty and pleasantly contrived a divertisement.

However, to quit our digression and return to the point at which we left our main subject, I mention how we have seen played at our Court and represented by our Queens right graceful ballets, and especially by the Queen Mother; yet as a rule, for us courtiers we would be ever casting our eyes on the feet and legs of the ladies which

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did take part in them, and did find by far our greatest pleasure in seeing them display their legs so agreeably, and so move and twinkle their feet so nimbly as that naught could be better. For their petticoats and frocks were much shorter than usual, though not so much so as in the nymhs' costume, nor so high as they should have been and as was desired of many. Yet did our eyes fasten somewhat on those parts, and especially when they were dancing the quick step, which making the skirts to flutter up, would generally show something or other pleasant to look at,—a sight that I have seen several find altogether too much for them, so that they did lose all self-control over themselves.

The fair ladies of Sienna, at the first beginning of the revolt of their city and republic, did form three companies of the most beautiful and greatest ladies were in that town. Each company did mount to a thousand, so as the whole was three thousand strong. One company was clad in violet lustring, one in white, and one in red, all being attired as nymphs with very short skirts, in such wise that they did make full display of fine limbs and legs. In this wise they did pass in review before all their fellow townsmen as well as before his Grace the Cardinal of Ferrara and M. de Termes, Lieutenants General of our French King Henri, all firmly resolved and determined to die for the Republic and for France, and all ready to give a hand to the work of fortifying the said city. Indeed all and each did carry a fascine ready on shoulder; and did rouse by their gallantry the admiration of all. This tale I do set down in another place, where I am speaking of high-spirited women; for truly 'tis one of the finest exploits was ever done by gallant dames.



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For the present I will content me with saying how I have heard it told by many gentlemen and soldiers, both French and foreign, and especially by sundry of that town, that never aught finer was seen, seeing they were all great ladies and of the chiefest families of that place, and each fairer than another, for 'tis well known that beauty is far from lacking in that city, but is very general therein. But if it were a fine sight to behold their handsome faces, 'twas no less so to see and gaze upon their handsome limbs and fine legs, with their pretty hosen and shoes well fitting and well put on, as the dames of those parts know right well how to do. Then they did all wear their gowns very short, in the guise of nymphs, that they might march the easier,—the which was enough to tempt and warm up the most chilliest and mortified of mankind. And what did most pleasure the onlookers was this, that whereas they might any day see their faces, they could not so behold these fine and handsome legs of theirs. He was no fool which did devise this same mode and costume of nymphs, for it doth readily afford many fine sights and agreeable spectacles. The skirts be cut very short, and are divided up the side to boot, as we do yet see it represented in the fine Roman antiques, which doth still more flatter the wantonness of the eye.

But in our own day, with the fair ladies of Chios, matrons and maids, what and how is it they be so attractive? Why! truly 'tis their beauty and their charms of face and figure,—but also their superb fashions of dress, and above all their very short gowns, which do make full display of their dainty, well shod feet.

This doth remind me how one time at Court a lady of very tall and imposing figure, looking at a magnificent

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and noble hunting piece in tapestry, wherein Diana and all her band of virgin huntresses were very naturally represented, and all by the fashion of their dress did show their pretty feet and fine legs, did chance to have with her one of her companions, which was of very low and small stature, and who was likewise diverting herself along with the other in examining the said tapestry. To her she did say thus: "Ha! ha! little one, if all we women did dress after that fashion, you would be in a bad way and would lose all advantage, for your great high-heeled shoes would betray you; and you would never have such grace in your walk, nor such charm in showing of your leg, as we that are tall and stately. You would have to keep close and scarce show at all. Give thanks then to the days we live in and the long gowns we wear, which be so favourable to you, and do hide your legs so conveniently. For indeed with your great high-heeled shoes a foot tall, these be more like a cudgel than a woman's leg. If a man had never a weapon to fight withal, he would but have to cut off a leg and grasp it by the end where your foot is shod and encased in your high shoes, and he would have a beautiful club for the fiercest encounter."

This lady was very right in what she said, for truly the prettiest leg in the world, if it be so imprisoned in these great, heavy, high-heeled shoes, doth lose its beauty altogether, seeing this great club foot doth cause too great a deformity for anything; for if a pretty foot well shod and dainty goeth not with the leg, all is of no avail. Now these dames which do adopt these great, heavy, lumbering high-heeled shoes think no doubt to embellish and better their figures and thereby appear more

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beautiful and be the more loved; but on the other hand they do worsen their fine leg and foot, which be surely in their natural beauty worth as much as a fine tall figure that is but a sham.

Similarly in time of yore, a pretty foot did carry with is so much of wanton fascination, that many prudish minded and chaste Roman ladies, or at the least such as did feign to be so,—and even in our own day some do the like in Italy in imitation of antique morals,—do as much scruple about showing this part in public as their faces, hiding it under their flowing gowns all ever they can, so that none may see it; and in walking do go so prudishly, discreetly and carefully as that it never passeth out from under their robe.

This is well enough for such as are trained in prudish bearing and respectability, and are for never offering temptation; we must say this much for them. Yet I ween, an if they had their free choice, they would make display enough both of foot and leg, and of other things to boot. Beside, they do consent to show the same to their husbands, for all their hypocrisy and petty scruples about being dames of position and respectability. However I but relate the fact as it is.

I do know of a certain gentleman, a very gallant and honourable man, which only by having seen at Rheims at the Consecration of the late King, the lovely leg, in a white silk stocking, of a great and very fair lady, a widow and of tall stature, from underneath those scaffolds they erect for ladies to see the ceremony from, did fall so deep in love with her as that he grew well nigh desperate with passion. Thus what her handsome face had failed to effect, this her fine development of leg did

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bring about; though truly the said lady did deserve by the beauty of all her person to drive an honourable gentleman to his death. And I have known other men too of the like humour.

At any rate for final word will I say this, and I have known the same to be held as an incontrovertible maxim by many gallant courtiers, my comrades, that the display of a fine leg and pretty foot is a thing most dangerously apt to fascinate wanton eyes to love; and I wonder much that some of our many good writers, whether poets or others, have never writ the praises thereof, as they have of other parts of fair ladies' bodies. For myself, I would have writ more on this subject, but that I was *afear'd*, if I did overmuch belaud these parts of the person, I should be reproached as scarce enough heeding the rest. Beside I have perforce to treat of other matters, and may not tarry too long over one.

Wherefore I do now make an end with this little word of advice: "For God's sake, Ladies, be not so careful to make you seem of taller stature and other than you are; but rather look to the beauty of your legs, the which be so fair and fine, at any rate with some of you. But ye do mar the charm of them with those monstrous high-heeled boots and huge horse-shoes ye do wear. Doubtless ye do need such; but by having the same of such exaggerated size, ye do disgust folk far more than ye imagine."

I have said my say. Whosoever will, may bepraise the other beauties of woman, as sundry of our poets have done; but I maintain, a fine leg, a limb well shapen and a pretty foot, do exercise no small fascination and power in the realm of Love.



## FOURTH DISCOURSE

Concerning old dames as fond to practise love as  
ever the young ones be.

1.



HAVE spoke afore of old dames which be fain to play the wanton; yet do I further append this discourse here. So by way of commencement, I will say how one day myself being at the Court of Spain and conversing with a very honourable and fair lady, but withal something advanced in age, I did hear her pronounce these words: *Que ningunas damas lindas, o alo menos pocas, se hazen viejas de la cinta hasta abaxo*, "that never a fair lady, or at the least very few such, are old from the waist downwards." On my asking her in what sense she did mean this, whether 'twas the beauty of person from waist down that did never diminish in any wise by reason of age, or the desire and appetite of concupiscence that did not at all fail or grow chilled in these parts, she did make answer she intended both the one and the other. "For indeed," she went on, "as to the prickings of the flesh, no cure is there for these you must know, but death only; albeit old age would seem to be an obstacle thereto. Yet doth every beautiful woman ever fondly love her own self, and in so loving, 'tis not for her own, but some other's sake; and is in

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no wise like Narcissus, the which, so foolish was the youth, himself lover and beloved, did think scorn of all other affections."

A beautiful woman hath naught of this humour about her. So have I heard it related of a very fair lady, which after first loving herself and taking much joy of her own beauty alone and by herself, and in her bed stripping of herself quite naked, and so looking at her own person, and admiring and contemplating the same, did curse her hard fate to be vowed to one sole husband that was not worthy to enjoy so fair a body, holding him to be in no wise her equal in merit. At the last was she so fired by such contemplations and sights and longings as that she did bid a long farewell to her virtue and her marriage vow, and did practise new love with a new lover.

This is how a woman's beauty doth kindle and inflame her, constraining her to have resort to such, whether husbands or lovers, as may satisfy her desire; while 'tis always the nature of one love to lead to another. Wherefore being thus fair and sought after of some admirer, and if she disdain not to answer to his passion, she is at once in the snare. So Laïs, the famous courtesan, was used to declare, that so soon as ever a woman doth open her mouth to make a gentle reply to her friend, lo! her heart is flown, and the door opened straightway.

Moreover no fair and honourable woman doth ever refuse any good praise that men render her; and once she is gratified and doth suffer such commendation of her beauty, grace and gentle ways, the which we courtiers be ever wont to make by way of first assault of love, though it may be some while a-doing, yet in the long run we do always win the place.

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Further, it is a true thing that no beautiful woman, having once made essay of the game of love, doth ever unlearn the same, and for ever after is the sport right pleasant and delightsome to her. Just as when a man hath grown accustomed to good living, 'tis exceeding disagreeable to discontinue the same; and as this is better for the health, the more a man is got on in years, (as the doctors declare), so the more a woman advanceth in age, all the more is she greedy after the good cheer she is accustomed to. This daintiness is nowise forgot or remitted because of the weight of years, but more like by some long sickness, (so the faculty tell us), or other accident; and albeit disinclination may be experienced for some while, yet will the taste for such good things be renewed anon.

'Tis said, again, how that all activities do decrease and diminish by reason of age, which doth rob folk of the strength to properly exercise the same,—except only that of Venus, the which is carried out very luxuriously, without sore trouble or much exertion, in a soft, comfortable bed, and altogether at ease. I do speak now of the woman, and not of the man, to the share of which latter falleth all the labour and task-work in this province. A man then, once deprived of this pleasure, doth easily and early abstain from further indulgence,—albeit sometimes it may be in spite of himself; whereas a woman, be she of what age she will, doth take to her, like a furnace, and burn up, all stuff that cometh her way. Nay! even though a dame should be so aged as to look but ill, and find herself in no such good case as in her younger years, yet she may by dint of money find means to get gallant cavaliers at the current rate, and good ones too, as I have heard say. All

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commodities that cost dear do sore vex the purse,—(this goes counter to Heliogabalus' opinion, who the dearer he did buy his viands, the better he thought them),—except only the commodities of Love, the which be the more agreeable in proportion as they cost more, by reason of the great desire felt to get good value of the bargain and thoroughly enjoy the article purchased. So the poor talent one hath, is made to do triple service, or even hundredfold service, if that may any way be.

This is what a certain Spanish courtesan meant by her word to two brave gentlemen which did pick a quarrel together over her, and sallying forth to her house, did take sword in hand and fall to a-fighting. But she putting head out of window, did cry out to them: *Señores, mis amores se ganan con oron y plata, non con hierro*,—"Nay! Sirs, my love is won with gold and silver, not with iron."

All love well purchased is well and good. Many a lady and many a cavalier which have done such traffic could tell us so much. But to allege here examples of ladies,—and there be many such,—which have burned as hot in their old age as ever in youth, and have satisfied, or to put it better, have kept up, their fires with second husbands and new lovers, would be for me now a waste of labour, seeing I have elsewhere given many such. Yet will I bring forward one or two here also, for my subject doth require it and is suitable to such matters.

I have heard speak of a great lady, one that was as well talked about as any of her day, which one day seeing a young gentleman with very white hands, did ask him what he was used to do to have them so. To this he made answer, by way of jape and jest, that so oft as ever he could,



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he would be a-rubbing of them with the spirit of love. "Ah! well," she replied, "'tis my bad luck then; for more than sixty years have I been washing myself therewith, and I'm just as bad as the day I began. Yet do I bathe so every day."

I have heard speak of a lady of pretty advanced age, who wishing to marry again, did one day ask a physician's advice, basing her reasons for so doing on the fact that she was exceeding full of all sorts of evil humours, which had assailed and ever afflicted her since she was a widow. Yet had this never so happed in the lifetime of her husband, seeing that by dint of the constant exercises they did perform together, the said humours were consumed. The physician, who was a merry fellow, and willing enough to please her herein, did counsel her to marry again, and in this fashion to chase away the humours from her, saying 'twas better far to be happy than sad. The lady did put this advice in practise, and found it answer very well, indeed, superannuated as she was. This was, I mean, with a new husband and lover,—which did love her at least as much for the sake of her good money as for any pleasure he gat of her. Though of a surety there be many quite old dames, with whom as much enjoyment is to be had as with younger women; nay! 'tis sometimes greater and better with such, by reason of their understanding the art and science of love better, and so the more stimulating their lovers' taste therefor.

The courtesans of Rome and of Italy generally, when they are verging toward ripe years, do maintain this maxim, that *una galina vecchia fa miglior brodo che un' altra*,—"an old hen doth make better broth than any other."

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The Latin poet Horace doth make mention of an old woman, which did so stir and toss about when she came to bed, and move her so violently and restlessly, that she would set not alone the bed but the whole house a-trembling. A gallant old dame in sooth! Now the Latins do name suchlike agitation and wanton movement *subars a sue*.

We do read of the Emperor Caligula, that of all his women which he had, he did love best Cæsonia, and this not so much by reason of her beauty, nor because she was in the flower of age, for indeed she was by then well on in years, but on account of her exceeding lustfulness and the wantonness that was in her, as well as the good pains she did take in the exercise thereof, and the experience her age, and long practise had taught her, herein leaving all the other women in the lurch, albeit handsomer and younger than herself. He was used to take her commonly to the wars with him, clad and armed like a man, and riding in manlike wise side by side with him, going so far even as often times to show her to his comrades all naked, and make her exhibit to them her feats of suppleness.

Thus are we bound to allow that age had in no wise diminished the lady's beauty, seeing how greatly the Emperor was attached to her. Natheless, with all this fond love he did bear her, very oft wheneas he was a-kissing and touching her fair neck, he could not hinder himself, so bloody-minded was he, from saying: "Ah! the beautiful neck it is; yet 'tis in my power at will to have it cut." Alas and alas! the poor woman was slain along with her husband with a sword thrust through the body by a Centurion, and her daughter broken and dashed to

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death against a wall,—the which could never have been but for the ill deeds of her father.<sup>1</sup>

We read further of Julia, step-mother of the Emperor Caracalla,<sup>2</sup> how that one day being as it were by inadvertence half naked, she did expose one-half of her body to his eyes; whereupon he said these words, “Ha, ha! but I could relish it well enough, an if it were allowed me!” She answered straightway, “So please you, know you not you are Emperor, and therefore make laws instead of obeying them?” On hearing these words and seeing her readiness, he did marry her and couple with her.

A reply of pretty much the same import was given to one of our last three French Kings, whose name I will not mention. Being enamoured and fallen deep in love with a very fair and honourable lady, after having made the earlier advances and preliminaries of his suit to her, did one day cause his pleasure to be conveyed to her more at length by an honourable and very judicious and adroit gentleman I know by name and repute. So he, conveying to her the Sovereign’s little missive, did use all his eloquence to persuade her to consent. But she, no fool at this game, did defend herself the best she could by many excellent reasons the which she well knew how to allege, without forgetting the chiefest, her honour,—that mighty, or rather mighty small, treasure. At the last, the gentleman after much disputing and many protestations, did ask her finally what she did desire he should tell the King. Then she, after some moments of reflection, did suddenly, as if brought to bay, pronounce these words following: “What are you to tell him?” she cried, “why! what else but this? tell him I know well enough that no refusal was ever advantageous to any, man or woman, which doth

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make such to his King and Sovereign; and that very oft a Prince, exerting the power he hath, will rather give the orders and taking a thing than go on begging and praying for it." Not ill content with this reply, the gentleman doth straightway bear it to the King; who taking time by the fore-lock, doth hie him to the lady in her chamber, and without any over great effort or resistance doth have his will. The reply was at once witty, and showed her good will to pleasure her King. Albeit men say 'tis never well to have sport or dealings with the King, yet must we except this particular game, wherefrom never was ill advantage gotten, if only the woman do behave her prudently and faithfully.

To return to the afore named Julia, step-mother of the Emperor, she must need have been a very harlot to love and take for husband one which had on her own bosom slain some while before their own proper son; \* verily she was a base harlot and of base heart. Still 'twas a grand thing to be Empress, and for such an honour all else is forgot. This Julia was greatly loved of her husband, albeit she was well advanced in years. Yet had she lost naught of her beauty; but was very fair and very ready-witted, as those her words do witness, which did make yet greater the bed of her greatness.

## 2.



**FILIPPO MARIA**, Third Duke of Milan,<sup>1</sup> did wed as second wife Beatrix, widow of the late deceased Facino Cane,<sup>2</sup> being then an old woman. But she did bring him for marriage portion four hundred thousand crowns, without reckoning other furnishings, rings and jewelry, which did amount to a great sum, and quite wiped out all thought of her age. Yet spite of all, she did fall under her husband's suspicions of having gone to play the wanton elsewhere, and for this suspicion was done to death of him. You see how little did old age destroy her taste for the games of love. We must e'en suppose the great practice she had had thereof had but given her the desire for more and more.

Constance, Queen of Sicily,<sup>3</sup> who from her youth up and near all her days, had been vestal and never budged forth of a cloister-cell, but lived there in life-long chastity, getting her freedom to come out in the world at last at the age of fifty, though in no wise fair and quite decrepit, yet was fain to taste the joys of the flesh and marry. She did grow pregnant of a child at the age of fifty-two, and did desire to be brought to bed publicly in the open meadows about Palermo, having had a tent or pavilion set up there on purpose, to the end folk might have never a doubt but the fruit of her body was verily to hand. And this was one of the greatest miracles ever seen since the days of Saint Elizabeth. Natheless the *History of Naples*<sup>4</sup> doth affirm 'twas reputed a supposititious child. At any rate he did grow up a great man for all that; but indeed these, and the greater part of valiant men,

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are just the folk that be often bastards, as a high-born friend of mine did one day remark to me.

I knew once an Abbess of Tarascon, sister of Madame d'Usez, of the noble house of Tallard,<sup>s</sup> which did leave off her religious habit and quit her convent at over fifty years of age, and did wed the great Chanay we have seen play so gamesome a part at Court.

Many other women of religion have done the like, whether in wedlock or otherwise, for to taste the joys of the flesh, and this at a very ripe age. If such as these do so, what are we to expect our everyday dames to do, which have been broken in thereto from their tenderest years? Is age like to hinder them from now and again tasting and eating tit-bits, the customary enjoyment whereof they have so long been used to? Else what would become of so many good strengthening soups and cunningly compounded broths, so much ambergris and other warming and comfortable drugs for to warm and comfort their stomach now grown old and chilly? For 'tis not open to doubt but that such like decoctions, while they do recreate and keep sound their weakly stomachs, do likewise perform another function on the sly, in giving them more heat of body, and rousing some degree of passionate warmth. This is sure and certain,—without appealing to the opinion of physicians, to whom however I do refer me as to the matter.

And another and yet greater advantage for them is this. Being now aged and coming nigh on to their fifty years, they need feel no more fear of getting with child, and so have full, plenary and most ample freedom to enjoy and make up all arrears of those pleasures which may—

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hap some of them have not dared take hitherto for dread of the consequences. So it is that there be many which do give more rein to their amours when got to the wrong side of fifty than when still on the right. Not a few ladies both of the highest and less exalted rank have I heard tell of as being of this complexion, so much so that I have known or heard of several that have many a time and oft longed for their fifty years to have come and gone, to hinder them of conceiving and suffer them to do it the more freely without risk or scandal of any sort. Nay! why *should* they refrain them on the approach of old age? Indeed you might well say that after death itself there be women which yet feel some movement and pricking of the flesh. This bringeth me to another tale I must needs tell.

I had in former days a younger brother called Captain Bourdeille, one of the bravest and most valiant captains of his time. I am bound to say thus much of him, albeit he was my brother, without going too far in my panegyric of him. The same is proved by the fights he fought both in battle and in the lists; for indeed he was of all gentlemen of France the one that had most skill of arms, so that in Piedmont he was known as one of the Rodomonts of those parts. He was slain at the assault of Hedin, the last time that place was retaken.

He was intended by his father and mother for a life of letters; and with this view was sent at the age of eighteen into Italy to study. He did take up his abode at Ferrara, for the reason that Madame Renée de France, Duchess of Ferrara, was much attached to my mother, and did keep him in that city to pursue his studies, for there was an University there. However, seeing he was

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fitted neither by birth nor disposition for this sort of life, he did study scarce at all, but did rather amuse himself with the delights of love and courtship. In fact he did fall deep in love with a certain French lady, a widow, which was in the service of the Duchess, known as Mlle. de La Roche (or de La Mothe) and did have much pleasure with her, each loving the other exceeding well, till at the last my brother, being recalled home again by his father, who saw he was ill fitted for letters, was reluctantly constrained to return.

The lady, loving him greatly, and greatly fearing it might turn out ill with him, for she was much of Luther's way of thinking, who was then widely followed, did beg my brother to take her with him to France and to the Court of Marguerite, Queen of Navarre,<sup>e</sup> in whose service she had been, and who had given her to Madame Renée, when she was married and went to live in Italy. My brother, who was young and quite heedless, was only too glad of such excellent company, and did willingly escort her to Paris, where the Queen was then residing. This last was right glad to behold her, for of all women she was the wittiest and most ready of tongue, and was a handsome widow to boot and perfect in all accomplishments.

My brother, after having tarried some days with my grandmother and my mother, who was then performing her Court service, did presently go home to see his father. After some while, sickening utterly of letters, and seeing himself in no wise fitted for their pursuit, he doth quit that career altogether and away to the wars in Piedmont and Parma, where he did win much honour. So he did serve in these wars by the space of five or six



months without returning home. At the end of this time he went to see his mother, who was at the time at Court with the Queen of Navarre; the Queen was then holding Court at Pau, and my brother did make his reverence to her as she was returning from Vespers. Being one of the best natured Princesses was ever in this world, she did receive him right graciously, and taking him by the hand, did walk with him up and down the Church for an hour or twain, asking him news of the wars in Piedmont and Italy and of many other matters. To all this my brother did make answer so well that she was very well satisfied (for indeed he was as ready of tongue as any of his time) as well with his wit as with his person,—for he was a most handsome man, and of the age then of twenty-four. At the last, after long discourse with him, for 'twas ever the nature and complexion of the said noble Princess in no wise to scorn good talk and the conversation of good and honourable folk, gliding from subject to subject and still walking up and down the while, she did quietly bring my brother right over the tomb of Mlle. de La Roche, which had died three months before, and there staid him. Presently taking his hand, she said thus; “Cousin mine” (she called him so, seeing that a daughter of Albret had married into our house of Bourdeille; but for all that I do keep no greater state than another, nor suffer my ambition to run away with me), “cannot you feel something move down below under your feet?”—“Why! no, Madame,” he did reply.—“Nay! take heed and mark carefully, cousin,” she did resume.—But my brother only made answer, “Madame, I *have* taken heed, but I can feel nothing moving. The stone I tread on is firm enough.”—“Well, well! I must

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tell you then," the Queen went on, without keeping him longer in suspense, "that you are standing above the tomb and the body of poor Mlle. de La Roche, whom erst you did love so fondly; she is interred beneath this spot. Now seeing that our souls do possess feeling after our death, how can we doubt that this excellent creature, dead but lately, was moved so soon as ever you came over her? And if you did not mark it by reason of the grossness of the tomb, no doubt for this cause was she the more stirred and moved in herself. Now forasmuch as 'tis a right pious office to have memory of the dead, and specially of them we have loved, I do beseech you give her a *Pater noster* and an *Ave Maria* and a *de Profundis* to boot, and sprinkle her resting place with holy water; so shall you win the name of a very faithful lover and a good Christian. And to this end will I now leave you," and so quits him and hies her away. My brother, (who is since dead), failed not to perform what she had said, and then went to see her again; whereupon she did somewhat take him to task and rally him, for she was familiar with folk,—in a good sense that is,—and had graceful skill in gentle mockery.

Such then was the view this Princess did hold, but more by way of witty conceit and gentle sentiment than from actual belief, as I think.

These gentle words of the Princess do further remind me of an epitaph over a courtesan that is buried at the Church of our Lady of the People (del Popolo) at Rome, which doth read thus: *Quaeso, viator, ne me diutius calcata amplius calces*, "To him that passeth by: 'I have been kicked and spurned enough in my lifetime; spurn me no more.'" The Latin expression hath more

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grace than the English equivalent. I do put the thing down here more by way of a jest than anything else.

Well, to draw to an end, no need to be astonished that the Spanish lady named above did hold the maxim she did enunciate good of all such fair ladies as have been greatly loved of others, and have loved, and do love, themselves, and do take delight in being praised, albeit they may have but little left of their by-gone beauty. But yet 'tis ever the chiefest pleasure you can give them, and the one they do love the most, whenas you tell them they are still the same, and are in no wise changed or aged, and above all those of them which grow not old from the waist downwards.

I have heard speak of a very fair and honourable lady which one day did say thus to her lover: "I know not whether for the future old age will bring me increasing inconvenience and incapacity,"—she was fifty-five years old; "but, God be thanked, I did never do myself pleasure so well as I do now, nor ever took greater joy therein. Whether this do last out and continue till my extremest old age or no, I have no fault to find, nor complaint to make of my days gone by."

Now as concerning love and concupiscence, I have both here and elsewhere adduced examples enough, without dwelling longer on this subject. Let us now consider a while the maxim as concerning this special beauty of fair ladies, how that it doth not diminish by reason of old age.

For sure, the aforesaid Spanish lady did allege many good reasons and seemly comparisons, likening these fair ladies to fine old buildings of yore whose ruins do yet remain superb and imposing. So amid the noble antiqui-

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ties of Rome do we see the ruins of palaces, superb relics of Collosseum and Thermæ, which to this day do plainly show what they once were, and do inspire all beholders with wonder and awe, their mere ruins being wondrous and surprising. Nay, more! on these same ruins men do still build right noble edifices, proving that the foundations be better and finer than fresh new ones. So very often in their constructions, the which our good architects and masons do undertake, if that they find some old ruins and ancient foundations, straightway do they build on these, and that in preference to laying new ones.

Likewise have I seen good galleys and ships built and reconstructed on old hulls and old keels, the which had long lain in harbour doing nothing; and these were every whit as good and sound as others which the ship-carpenters did frame and build all new, and of new timber fresh from the forest.

Furthermore, our Spanish lady was used to say,—do we not many a time see the summits of high towers carried away, overthrown and disfigured by winds, storms and lightning, while the base doth remain safe and sound? For 'tis ever against such lofty points that storms do spend their fury. The sea winds moreover do corrode and eat away the upper stones of a building and do wear them hollow more than those at the bottom, seeing these be not so much exposed as the ones higher up.

In like wise many fair ladies do lose the brilliancy and beauty of their pretty faces by various accidents whether of cold or heat, of sun and moon, and the like, as well as, more's the pity, by reason of various cosmetics, the which they do apply to them, thinking so to heighten their charms, but really and truly spoiling all their beauty

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thereby. Whereas in other parts, they do apply no other preparation but only nature's method, feeling therefore neither cold, nor rain, nor wind, neither sun nor moon, none of which do affect them at all.

If heat do inconvenience them, they know many means to gain relief and coolness; as likewise they can guard against cold in plenty of ways. So many inconveniences and injuries must needs be warded off from a woman's beauty of face, but few or none from that which lieth elsewhere. Wherefore we should never conclude, because a woman's countenance is spoiled, that she is all foredone all over, and that naught doth remain of fine and good, and that 'tis useless to build on that foundation.

I have heard a tale told of a certain great lady, which had been exceeding fair and much devoted to love. One of her old lovers having lost sight of her for the space of four years, through some journey he did undertake, on returning from the same did find her sadly changed from the fair countenance he had known erstwhile, the which did so disappoint him and chill his ardour as that he did no more care to board her nor to renew with her again the pleasure of former days. She did recognize him readily enough, did endeavour all she could to get him to come and see her. Accordingly to this end she did one day counterfeit sickness, and when he had come to visit her by daylight did thus say to him: "I know well enough, Sir! you do scorn me for my poor face so changed by age; but come, look you, and see if there be aught changed there. If my face has deceived you, at any rate there is no deception about that." So the gentleman examining her and finding her as fair and sound as ever, did straight recover appetite and did enjoy the flesh he had thought

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to be spoiled. "Now this is the way, Sir," said the lady, "you men are deceived! Another time, give no credence to the lies our false faces tell; for indeed the rest of our bodies doth by no means always match them. This is the lesson I would have you learn."

Another lady of the like sort, being thus sorely changed of her fair face, was in such great anger and despite against the same, that she would never more look at it in her mirror, saying 'twas unworthy of so much honour. So she had her head always dressed by her maids; and to make up, would ever look at the other parts of herself only and gaze at these, taking as much pride and delight therein as she had aforetime done in her beautiful face.

I have heard speak of another lady, who whenever she did lie by daylight with her lover, was used to cover her face with a fair white kerchief of fine Holland web, for fear lest, if he should look in her face, the upper works might chill and stay his affection, and move him to mere disgust; for indeed below was naught to chide at, but all was as fine as ever. This doth remind me of yet another very honourable lady I have heard tell of, who did make a diverting and witty reply. Her husband one day asking her why her hair in one place was not grown white and hoary like that of her head, "Ah, yes," she did exclaim, "the wretch it is! It hath done all the folly, yet doth it feel naught, nor experience any ill consequences. Many and many a time hath it made my head to suffer; whereas it doth ever remain unchanged, in the same good estate and vigour, and keepeth the same complexion, and above all the same natural heat, and the same appetite and sound health. But how far otherwise it is with my other parts,

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which do endure aches and pains for it, and my hair which hath long ago grown white and hoary.”

And she had good reason so to speak; for truly this doth engender in women many ills, and gout and other sicknesses. Moreover for being over hot at it, so the doctors say, do they grow prematurely hoary-headed. Thus we see fair ladies do never grow old in some parts, either in one fashion or the other.

I have heard many men relate,—men which have followed women freely, even going with courtesans,—how that they have scarce ever seen pretty women get old in certain parts, did always keep all their former beauty, and good will and hearty disposition to boot as good as aforetime. Nay, more! I have heard not a few husbands declare they did find their *old women* (so they called them) as fair and fine as ever, and as full of desire and wantonness, beauty and good will, discovering no change at all but of face, and were as fain to love them as ever they were in their young days.

In fine, how many men there be which do love old women for many reasons better than young! Just as there be many which do love old horses best, whether for a good day's work, or for the riding-school and display,—such animals as have been so well drilled in their youth as that you will have never a fault to find with them when grown old. Right well trained have they been, and have never after forgot their pretty cunning.

I have myself seen in our Royal stables a horse they called *Quadrant*, first broke in the time of King Henri. He was over two and twenty years old; but aged as he was, he yet went very well, and had forgot naught of his exercises. He could still give his King, and all which did see

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him go through his paces, great and real pleasure. I have seen the like done by a tall charger called *Gonzago*, from the stud-farm of Mantua, and which was of the same age as *Quadrabant*.

I have likewise seen that magnificent and well-known black, which had been set to stallion's work. Signor Antonio, who had charge of the Royal stud, did show him me at Meung,<sup>7</sup> one day I did pass that way, making him do the two strides and a leap, and the round step,—both which he did execute as well as the day M. de Carnavallet had first trained him,—for he was his horse. The late M. de Longueville was fain to hire him of his master for three thousand livres; however King Charles would not have it, but took him for himself, recompensing the owner in another way. A whole host of others I could easily name; but I should never have done, and so do refer me to those worthy squires which have seen so many of the sort.

Our late King Henri, at the camp of Amiens, had chose for his mount on the day of battle an horse called *le Bay de la Paix*, a very fine and strong charger, and aged. But he died of fever in the camp of Amiens; so the most expert farriers did declare, but 'twas deemed a strange thing to have happed.

The late Duc de Guise did send to his stud-farm of Esclairon<sup>8</sup> for the bay *Sanson*, which was there serving the mares as stallion, to be his mount at the battle of Dreux, where he did carry him excellently.

In his first wars the late Prince did take from the stud at Mun two and twenty horses, which were there as stallions, to serve him in his campaigns; and did divide the same among the different lords which were with him, after reserving his own share. Whereof the gallant Avaret did



have a charger which the great Constable had given to King Henri, and which was called *le Compère* (Old Gossip). Aged as he was, never was seen a better mount; his master did prove him in some good tough rencontres, and he did carry him right well. Captain Bourdet gat the Arab, on whose back our late King Henri was wounded and slain, a horse the late M. de Savoie had given him, called *le Malheureux* (the Unlucky). This was his name when he was presented to the King, and verily 'twas one of very ill omen to him. Never in his youth was he near so good as he was in his old age; though 'tis true his master, which was one of the most gallant gentlemen of France, did show him ever to the best advantage. In a word, of all these stallions, was not one that age did hinder from serving his master well, and his Prince and country. Indeed there be some old horses that will never give up; hence 'tis well said, no good horse doth ever become a mere hack.

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IF such sort be many fair dames, which in their old age be every whit as good as other women in their youth, and do give as great pleasure, from their having been in their time thoroughly well taught and trained. And be sure such lessons are not easily forgot. Then again the best of it is these be always most liberal and generous in giving, so as to keep in hand their cavalier and riders, which do get more money and demand an higher salary to bestride an old mount than a young one. 'Tis just the opposite with squires and real horsemen, which do never care so much

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to mount broke horses as young ones that be yet to break. However this is but reasonable after all.

There is a question I have seen debated on the subject of women of years, to wit: which doth bring the greater glory, to love a woman of years and have the enjoyment of her, or to so do with a young one. Not a few have I heard pronounce for the older woman. For they would maintain that the foolishness and heat which be in youth are of themselves debauched enough already and right easy to undo; whereas the prudence and coldness that would seem natural to age cannot but with difficulty be led astray. And so they which do succeed in corrupting such win the higher repute.

In like wise was the famous courtesan Laïs used to boast and glorify herself greatly of the fact that the philosophers did come so oft to visit her and learn in her school, more than of all the young and giddy folks which did frequent her society. So also Flora was ever proud to see great and dignified Roman senators arrive at her door, rather than young and foolish gallants. Thus methinks 'tis great glory to vanquish and overcome the wise prudence which should be in persons of ripe age, so far as pleasure and satisfaction go.

I do refer me to such men as have made experiment hereof, of the which sundry have told me how that a trained mount is ever more agreeable than a wild colt and one that doth not so much as know the trot. Furthermore, what pleasure and what greatest delight may not a man enjoy in mind, whenas he doth behold enter a ball-room, or one of the Queen's apartments, or a Church, or other place crowded with company, a lady of ripe years and dignity, *de alta guisa* (of lofty carriage) as they say

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in Italian, and above all a lady of honour to the Queen or some Princess, or the governess of some King's daughter, young queen or great princess, or mayhap mother of the maids of honour, one that is chose out and set in this high and sober office by reason of her modest and seemly carriage? You shall see her assuming all the part of the prudish, chaste and virtuous dame, while everybody doth of course suppose her so, by reason of her years; then what joy, when a man doth think in his heart, or e'en say it out to some trusty comrade and confidant of his, "Look at her yonder, with her solemn ways, her staid and cold and scornful mien! To see her, would you not deem butter would not melt in her mouth? Yet, alack-a-day! never a weathercock in all the wide world doth so shift and whirl so swift and nimbly as doth she."

For myself, I do verily believe the man which hath known this joy and can so say, is right well content at heart. Ha! ha! but I have known a many such dames in this world, which did counterfeit to be most modest, prudish and censorious duennas, yet were exceeding dissolute and lecherous when they did come to it. Yea! and they would be put on their backs far more than most young damsels, which, by reason of their too much inexperience, be afraid of the gentle strife! So do they say there is naught so good as old vixens for hunting abroad and getting food for their cubs to eat.

We read how of old days several Roman Emperors did take their pleasure in the debauching and having their will of suchlike high-born ladies of honour and repute, as well for the pleasure and contentment to be had therein,—and in good sooth there is more with such than with women of inferior sort,—as for sake of the glory and honour they

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did arrogate to themselves for having so debauched and bested them. So in like wise have I known in my own time not a few great Lords, Princes and Noblemen, which have found great boast and great content at heart, by reason of having done the same.

Julius Cæsar and Octavius, his successor, were exceeding ardent after such sort of conquests, as I have alleged before; and after them Caligula, who summoning to his feasts the most illustrious Roman ladies together with their husbands, would gaze steadfastly at the same and examine them minutely, nay! would actually put out his hand and lift their faces up, if by chance any of them did hang their heads as conscious of being dames of honour and repute,—though truly other some were fain but to counterfeit this modesty, and play the shamefaced prude. But verily there cannot have been a many genuine prudes in the days of these dissolute Emperors; yet must they needs make the pretense, albeit nothing more. Else had the game not been worth the playing; and I have myself in our day seen many a fair lady do the like.

Afterward such of them as did hit the worthy Emperor's taste, these he would take aside openly and from their very husbands' side, and leading them from the hall would escort them to a privy chamber, where he would take his pleasure of them to his full content. This done he would lead them back to sit down once more in their place; and then before all the company would proceed to commend their beauties and special hidden charms that were in them, specifying these same separately and severally. And any which had any blemishes, faults or defects of beauty, these he would by no means let off in silence, but was used always to

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describe and declare the same openly, without disguising or concealing aught.

Nero was even yet worse than this, being so curious as that he did examine his own mother's dead body, gazing steadfastly upon the same and handling all her limbs and parts, commending some and abusing others.

I have heard the same thing told of sundry great Lords of Christian days, which have had this same strange curiosity toward their dead mothers.

Nor was this all with the said Caligula; for he was used to retail all their movements, their naughty ways and tricks, and the modes and fashions they did follow in their doing of it, and in special of any which had been modest and prudish, or which had made pretense to be so at table. For verily if a-bed they were fain to do the like, there is small doubt but the cruel tyrant did menace them with death, unless they would do all his pleasure for his full content, and so constrained them by the terror of execution. Then after would he speak despitefully of them to his heart's content, to the sore shame and general mockery of the poor dames, who thinking to be accounted chaste and modest as ever women can be, and to play the hypocrite and counterfeit *donne da ben* (virtuous ladies), were utterly and entirely revealed in their true colours and made known as mere harlots and wanton wenches. And truly this was no bad business so to discover them in a character they did never wish to be known. And better still, 'twas always, as I have said, great ladies that were so entreated, such as wives of consuls, dictators, prætors, quæstors, senators, censors, knights, and others of the highest estate and dignity, as we might say in our own days and Christian lands, mighty Queens, (which yet

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are not to be compared with Consuls' wives, seeing these were paramount over all men), Princesses of greater and less puissance, Duchesses, Marchionesses, and Countesses, great and small, Baronesses, Knights' dames, and the like ladies of rank and rich estate. And truly there is no doubt at all but that many Christian Emperors and Kings, if they had the power to do the like of the Emperor Caligula toward ladies of such quality, would avail themselves thereof. But then they be Christians, which have the fear of God before their eyes, his holy ordinances, their own conscience and honour, and the ill-repute of their fellows, to say naught of the ladies' husbands, to whose generous spirit suchlike tyranny would be unendurable. Wherein of a surety our Christian Kings be deserving of high esteem and commendation, thus to win the love of fair ladies rather by dint of gentleness and loving arts than by brute force and harsh rigour,—and the conquest so gained is by far a nobler one.

I have heard speak of two great Princes<sup>1</sup> which have taken exceeding pleasure in thus discovering their ladies' beauties, charms and especial graces, as well as their deformities, blemishes and defects, together with their little ways, privy movements and wanton wiles,—not however in public, as did Caligula, but in privacy, with their close and particular friends. Truly a sad fashion to entreat the pretty persons of these poor ladies. Thinking to do well and sport agreeably for to pleasure their husbands, they be but scorned therefor and made a laughing-stock.

Well, to return to our former comparison,—just as we do see beautiful buildings based on better foundations and of better stone and material some than others, and for this cause endure longer in their glory and beauty,

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even so there be some dames of bodies so well complexioned and fairly fashioned, and endowed with so fine a beauty, as that time doth in no wise so prevail over them as with others, nor seem to undermine their comeliness at all.

We read in history how that Artaxerxes,<sup>2</sup> among all the wives he had, did love the most Astacia, which was a woman of very ripe age, yet still most beautiful, and had been the mistress of his late brother Darius. His son did fall so deep in love with her, so exceeding fair was she in spite of years, that he did demand to share her with his father, in the same way as his share of the Kingdom. But the father, angered by this and jealous at the notion of another sharing with him this dainty morsel, did make her Priestess of the Sun, forasmuch as in Persia women which hold this estate must vow themselves to absolute chastity.

We read again in the History of Naples how Ladislas, a Hungarian and King of Naples, did besiege in Taranto the Duchess Marie, widow of Rammondelo de Balzo, and after sundry assaults and feats of arms, did take her by arrangement with her children, and wed her, albeit she was of ripe years, yet exceeding fair to look upon, and carried her with him to Naples. She was thereafter known as Queen Marie and fondly loved and cherished of the King.

Myself once saw the fair Duchesse de Valentinois (Diane de Poitiers) at the age of seventy, as fair of face, as fresh-looking and lovable as at thirty; and verily she was well loved and courted by one of the greatest and most gallant Kings in all the world. I may tell her age frankly, without wrong to the beauty of this fair lady, seeing whenever a lady is loved of a great King, 'tis sure sign perfection

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doth abundantly reside in her, and make her dear to him. And surely that beauty which is given of heaven should never be spared in favour of heaven's demigods.

I saw this lady, six months before she died, still so very fair I can imagine no heart so flinty as not to have been stirred thereby, and though a while before she had broke a leg on the stony pavement of Orleans, riding and sitting her horse as lightly and cleverly as she had ever done. But the horse slipped and fell under her; and for this broken limb, and all the pains and sufferings she did endure, one would have thought her fair face must have been changed. But nothing of the sort, for her beauty, grace, majesty and gallant mien were just what they had ever been. And above all, she did possess an extraordinary whiteness of skin, without any recourse had to paint; only 'tis said that every morning she did employ certain washes compounded of spring water and sundry drugs, the which I cannot name like good doctors or cunning apothecaries can. I do believe that if this fair lady had lived yet another hundred years, she would never have aged, whether in face, so excellently framed was it, or in body, the parts covered and concealed that is, of such excellent temper and good condition was this. The pity is earth should ever cover these beauteous forms!

Likewise myself have seen the Marquise de Rothelin,<sup>s</sup> mother of the Dowager Princess de Condé and the late deceased M. de Longueville, in no wise diminished of her beauty by time or age, but keeping the fresh flower of her youth as aforetime, except only that her face did grow something redder toward the end. Yet did her beautiful eyes, that were unmatched in all the world, and which her



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daughter hath inherited, never alter, but were to the last as meet to wound hearts as ever.

Another I have seen in like case was Madame de la Bourdaisière,<sup>4</sup> afterward by a second marriage wife to the Maréchal d'Aumont. This lady in her later days was so fair to look on you would have said she was in her early youth still, and her five daughters, all beautiful women, did in no wise eclipse her. And readily enough, if the choice had been to make, would a man have left the daughters to take the mother in preference; yet had she borne a number of children. And truly of all women she did most take heed of her good looks, for she was a mortal enemy of the night damp and moonlight, and did avoid these all ever she could. The ordinary use of paint for the face, practised by so many ladies, was quite unknown to her.

I have also seen, and this is a more striking instance still, Madame de Mareuil, mother of the Marquise de Mézières and grandmother of the Princess-Dauphin, at the age of an hundred, at which she died, looking as fresh and upright, as alert, healthy and comely as at fifty. She had been a very handsome woman in her younger days.

Her daughter, the Marquise de Mézières named above, was of like sort and died in the like good case, but she was twenty years younger when this took place, and her figure had shrunk somewhat. She was aunt of Mme. de Bourdeille, my elder brother's wife, and did bring him the like excellent qualities. For albeit she have passed her fifty-third year and hath had fourteen children, one may truthfully say this,—and others which see her are of better judgment than I, and do assure me of the fact,—that the

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four daughters she hath by her side do look like her own sisters. So do we often see winter fruits, and relics of the past season, match those of Summer itself, and keep their sweetness, and be as fine and savour as these, and even more.

The Amirale de Brion too, and her daughter, Mme. de Barbézieux,<sup>5</sup> did continue very handsome women to quite old age.

I have been told of late how that the fair Paule de Toulouse,<sup>6</sup> so renowned of old days, is yet as beautiful as ever, though she is now eighty-four, and no change is to be seen, whether in her fine, tall figure or her beautiful face.

Another I have seen is the Présidente de Conte, of Bordeaux, of equal age and equal beauty, in all ways most lovable and desirable; and indeed she was a woman of many perfections. Many other such could I name, but I should never have done.

A young Spanish knight speaking of love to a lady of advanced age, but still handsome, she did make him this answer: *A mis completas desta manera me habla V. M.*! "How can you speak so to my complines?"—meaning to signify by complines her age and the decline of her best days, and the approach of night. The knight did reply: *Sus completas valen mas, y son mas graciosas que las horas de prima de qualquier otra dama*, "Your complines are better worth, and more fair and delectable than the hours of prime of any other lady." A very pretty conceit surely!

Another speaking in like wise of love to a lady of ripe years, and she making objection to him of her withered beauty,—which yet was not over and above so,—did thus

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answer her: *A las visperas se conoce la fiesta*,—"at vespers is the feast at its best."

4.



WE have yet among us to this day Madame de Nemours, of yore in the April of her beauty the wonder of the world, which doth still defy all devastating time. I may truly say of her, as may all that have seen her with me, that she was erst the fairest dame, in her blooming days, in all Christendom. I did see her one day dance, as I have told elsewhere, with the Queen of Scots, they twain all alone together and without any other ladies to bear them company, by way of a caprice, so that all such, men and women, as did behold them knew not to which to adjudge the palm of beauty. Verily, as one said at the time, you would have thought them those two suns which we read in Pliny to have once appeared together in the sky, to dazzle the world. Madame de Nemours, at that time Madame de Guise, did show the more luxurious figure; and if it be allowed me so to say without offence to the Queen of Scots, she had the more imposing and apparent dignity of port, albeit she was not a Queen like the other. But then she was grand-daughter of that great King,<sup>1</sup> the father of his people, whom she did resemble in many of her features, as I have seen him portrayed in the gallery of the Queen of Navarre, showing in every look the great monarch he was.

I think I was the first which did call her by this name of Grand-daughter of the great King, Father of his People. This was at Lyons, time when the King did return out of

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Poland; and often would I call her so, and she did me the honour to deem it well, and like it at my hands. She was in very deed a true grand-daughter of that great King, and especially in goodness of heart and beauty. For she was ever very good-hearted, and few or none are to be found that she ever did ill or displeasure to, while many did win great advantage in the time of her favour, that is to say in the time of her late husband, Monsieur de Guise, which did enjoy high consideration in France. Thus were there two very noble perfections united in this lady, goodness and beauty, and both of these hath she right well maintained to this present day, and by their means hath married two most honourable husbands, and two that few or none at all could have been found to match. And indeed, and if another could be found of like sort and worthy of her, and if she did wish for a third, she might well enjoy one more, so fair is she yet.

And 'tis a fact that in Italy folk do hold the ladies of Ferrara for good and tasty morsels,—whence hath come the saying, *potta ferraresa*, just as they say, *cazzo mantuano* (a Mantua verge). As to this, when once a great Lord of that country was making court to a great and beauteous Princess of France, and they were all commending him at Court for his excellent merits, valiance and the high qualities which did make him deserving of her favours, there was one, the late M. d'Au,<sup>3</sup> Captain of the Scottish Guards, which did come nearer the point than any with these words, "Nay! you do forget the chief of all, his *cazzo mantuano* to wit."

I did once hear a like speech, how when the Duke of Mantua, which was nicknamed the *Gobin* (Hunchback), because he was excessively hunchbacked, was desirous of

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wedding the sister of the Emperor Maximilian, the lady was told that he was so sadly deformed. But she only made answer, as 'tis said: *Non importa purché la campana habbia qualche difetto, ma ch' el sonaglio sia buono* ("No matter if the bell have some flaw, provided the clapper be good"),—meaning thereby this same *caxxo mantuano*. Some indeed aver she did never say the thing at all, seeing she was too modest and well brought up; but at any rate others did say it for her.

But to return to this same Princess of Ferrara, I did see her at the marriage of the late M. de Joyeuse appear clad in a mantle of the Italian fashion, the sleeves drawn back half way up the arms in the Siennese mode. But there was no lady there which could outshine her, and no man but said: "This fair Princess cannot make herself any fairer, so fair is she already. And 'tis easy to judge by her beauteous face that she hath other hidden beauties of great charm and parts which are not seen. Just as by looking at the noble façade of a fine building, 'tis easy to judge that within there be fair chambers, antechambers and closets, fair alcoves and privy places." In many another spot likewise hath she displayed her beauty, and no long while since, in this autumn of her days, and especially in Spain at the marriage of Monsieur and Madame de Savoie, in such wise that the admiration of her and her charms did remain graven in that land for all time. And if my pen had wings of power and range enough to raise her to the skies, right gladly would I devote it to the task; but 'tis too weak for such emprise. Yet will I speak of her again later. No doubt is there but this Princess was a very beautiful woman in her Springtide,

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her Summer and Autumn, yea! and is still in her Winter, albeit she hath had many griefs and many children.

The worst of it is that the Italians, scorning a woman which hath had a number of children, do call such an one *scrofa*, that is to say a "sow." But surely they which do bear handsome, gallant and noble sons, as did this Princess, are praiseworthy, and do in no wise merit this ugly name, but rather that of heaven's favourites.

I will only add this remark: What a strange and wondrous inconsistency is here, that the thing of all others most fickle and inconsistent doth offer such resistance to time, to wit a pretty woman! 'Tis not I which do say this; sorry should I be to do so. For truly I do esteem highly the constancy of many of the sex, nor are all inconstant. 'Tis from another I borrow the remark.

I would gladly adduce the names of ladies of other lands, as well as of our own, that have still been fair in their Autumn and Winter; but for this while I will mention two only in this class.

One is the good Queen Elizabeth of England, the which is reigning at this day, and who they tell me is as fair as ever. If this be true, I do hold her for a very fair and beauteous Princess; for myself have seen her in her Summertide and in her Autumn season. As for her Winter, she doth now approach near the same, if she be not there already; for 'tis long ago I did see her, and the first time ever I saw her, I know what age they did give her then. I do believe what hath kept her so long in her prime of beauty is that she hath never been wed, nor borne the burden of marriage, the which is a very grievous one, above all when a woman hath many children. The said Queen is deserving of all praise on all accounts, were it

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not for the death of that gallant, beautiful and peerless Princess, the Queen of Scots, the which hath sore stained her good repute.

5.



THE second foreign Princess I shall name is the Marquise de Gouast, Donna Maria of Aragon, which lady myself have seen still very beautiful in her final season. And I will show this in an account, the which I will abridge all ever I can.

After the death of King Henri<sup>1</sup> of France, one month later died also Pope Paul IV.,<sup>2</sup> Caraffa, and it became needful for the election of a new Pope that all the Cardinals should meet together. Amongst others there came from France the Cardinal de Guise, and did fare to Rome by sea with the King's galleys, whereof the General was François de Lorraine, Grand Prior of France, brother of the said Cardinal, who did convoy him, as a good brother should, with a fleet of sixteen galleys. And they did make such good speed and with so fine a wind astern, as that they did arrive in two days and two nights at Civita Vecchia, and from there presently to Rome. But being come thither, the Grand Prior seeing they were not yet ready to proceed to the new election (and as a fact it was yet three months more a-doing), and that accordingly his brother could not at present return, and his galleys were but lying idle in port meantime, he did determine to go on to Naples to see that town and spend his leisure there.

So on his arrival, the Viceroy, at that time the Duke of Alcala, did receive him as if he had been a King. But

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before his actual arrival he did salute the town with a very fine salvo of artillery which did last a great while; and the same honour was repaid him by the town and its forts, so as you would have said the very heavens were strangely thundering during the said cannonade. And keeping his galleys in line of battle and review order, and at some distance to seaward, he did despatch in a skiff M. de l'Estrange, a gentleman of Languedoc, a very discreet and honourable man, and one which could speak very gracefully, to the Viceroy, to the end he might not startle him, and to ask his leave (seeing that albeit we were at peace and on the best of terms we did come with all the terrors of war) to enter the harbour, for to see the town and visit the sepulchres of his ancestors which were there interred, and cast holy water upon them and make a prayer.

This the Viceroy did accord very readily. Then did the Grand Prior advance and renew the salvo with as fine and furious a cannonade as before, both with the main-deck guns and his sixteen galleys and other pieces of ordnance and with arquebus fire, in such wise that all his fleet was a mass of flame. So did he make entry most proudly to the mole, with standards and pennants flying, and dressed with flags of crimson silk, and his own of damask, and with all the galley-slaves clad in crimson velvet, and the soldiers of his body-guard the same, and wearing short cloaks covered with silver broidery. The commander of these was Captain Geoffroy, a Provençal and a brave and gallant soldier. Altogether our French galleys were found of all right fine, swift and well careened and above all the "Ship Royal," to the which never a fault



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could be found; for indeed this Prince was in all ways exceeding magnificent and right liberal.

So being come to the mole in this gallant array, he did there land and all we his suite with him, at a spot where the Viceroy had commanded to have ready horses and coaches for to receive us and carry us to the town. And truly we did there find an hundred steeds,—coursers, jennets, Spaniards, barbs and other horses, each finer than the other, with saddle-cloths of velvet all wrought with broidery, some silver and some gold. He that would ride a-horse did so, and he that preferred to go in a coach, found one ready, for there were a score there of the finest and richest, excellently horsed and drawn by the finest cattle ever seen. There too stood many great Princes and Lords, as well of the Kingdom of Naples as of Spain, which did welcome the Grand Prior most honourably on behalf of the Viceroy. On landing he did mount a Spanish horse, the finest I have seen for many a long day, which the Viceroy did after present to him; and did manage him right well, and make him perform some brilliant curvets, as was much spoke of at the time. The Prince, who was a very good horseman, as good indeed as he was a seaman, did make a very fine show thus mounted; and he did display his horse's paces to the best advantage, and in most graceful style, seeing he was one of the handsomest Princes of his day, and one of the most pleasant and accomplished, and of a fine, tall and active figure,—which is a rare thing with suchlike great personages. Thus was he conducted by all these Lords and many another noble gentleman to the Viceroy's Palace, where this last did await him and paid him all possible honour, and lodged him in his own house, and did feast him most

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sumptuously, both him and all his band. This he was well able to do, seeing he did profit him by twenty thousand crowns through this journey. We were, I daresay, a couple of hundred gentlemen that were with him, Captain of galleys and others, and were lodged with most of the great Lords of the city, and that most sumptuously.

First thing in the morning, on coming out from our chambers, we did find attendants so well appointed as that they would present themselves instantly to ask what we were fain to do, and whither we would go to take our pleasure. And if we did call for horses or coaches, in a moment, our wish was no sooner expressed than satisfied. So they would away at once to seek whatever mount we did crave, and all these so fine, rich and magnificent as might have contented a King; and then off on our way to take our day's pleasure, in such wise as each did prefer. In very fact were we well nigh spoiled by excess of enjoyment and all delights in that fair city; nor can we say there was any lack of such, for indeed I have never seen a town better supplied therewith in every sort. One alone was wanting, to wit the familiar converse, frank and free, with ladies of honour and repute,—for of others there was enough and to spare. But the defect was well and wisely remedied for the time being by the complaisance of this same Marquise de Gouast, in whose honour is the present discourse writ. For she, being a right courteous lady and full of all honourable feeling, and well fitting the nobility of her house, having heard the high repute of the Grand Prior for all the perfections that were in him, and having seen him pass through the city on horseback and recognized his worth, as is meet between folk of high station toward one another, with the magnanimity

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she did ever show in all things, did send one day a very honourable and well mannered gentleman of her attendance to greet the Prince from her, charging him to say, that if her sex and the custom of the country had suffered her to visit him, she would right gladly have come very readily to offer him her best services, as all the great Lords of the Kingdom had done. But she did beg him to take the will for the deed, offering him the use of her houses, castles and her best service in all things.

The Grand Prior, who was courtesy itself, did thank her most heartily, as was but meet; and did send word how that he would come to kiss her hands straightway after dinner. And this he did not fail to do, accompanied by all of us gentlemen which were with him in his suite. We did find the Marquise in her guest hall along with her two daughters, Donna Antonina and Donna Hieronima,—or was it Donna Joanna? for indeed I cannot say for sure, it having now slipped my memory,—as well as many other fair dames and damsels, so richly apparelled and of such a charming grace as that I have never, outside our own Court of France and that of Spain, seen elsewhere a more beauteous band of fair ladies.

Then did the Marquise salute the Grand Prior in the French fashion and did welcome him with every mark of honour; and he did return the same, even yet more humbly,—*con mas gran sosiego* (with the very greatest respect), as they say in Spanish. Their discourse was for the present of mere commonplaces; while the rest of us, such as could speak Italian or Spanish, did accost the other ladies, whom we did find most honourable and gallant, and of very pleasing conversation.

On our departure, the Marquise, having learned from

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the Grand Prior that he did purpose to make a stay of a fortnight in the place, said thus to him: "Sir, if at any time you know not what to do and are in lack of pastime, your coming hither will ever do me much honour, and you shall be most welcome, as it were at the house of your own lady mother; and I beg you to use the same precisely as though it were your own, neither more nor less. I have the good fortune to be loved and visited by honourable and fair dames of this Kingdom and city as much as any lady therein; and seeing your youth and merit do set you to love the conversation of honourable ladies, I will beseech them to resort hither yet more frequently than they do use, to bear you company and all the fair and noble gentlefolk which be with you. Here stand my two daughters, the which I will direct, albeit they are not so well accomplished as they should be, to bear you company after the French fashion, to wit to laugh, dance, play and talk freely, modestly and honourably, even as you do at the Court of France. And I would gladly enough offer myself for one; only 'twould be very irksome to a young Prince, handsome and gallant like yourself, to have to entertain an old woman, worn out, tiresome and unlovable such as I. For verily and indeed youth and age do scarce accord well together."

These words the Grand Prior did straightway take objection to, assuring her that old age had gat no hold at all upon her, and that he would never hear of any such thing, but that her Autumn did overpass all the Spring-tides and Summers that were in that hall. And truly she did still seem a very handsome and very lovable woman, yea! even more than her two daughters, pretty and young as these were. Yet was she then very nigh sixty good

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years old. This little speech of the Prince did much pleasure the Marquise, as we could easily see by her laughing face and all her words and ways.

We did leave her house exceeding delighted with the lady,—and above all the Grand Prior himself, who had instantly fallen in love with her, as he did inform us. Little doubt then but this fair and honourable lady, and her fair band of attendant dames, did draw the Grand Prior to resort every day to her house; for indeed if we went not there after dinner, we did so in the evening. The Prince did take for mistress her eldest daughter, albeit he did better love the mother; but 'twas done *per adumbrar la cosa*,—"to veil the matter."

Tiltings at the ring were held in plenty, whereat the Grand Prior did bear away the prize, as well as many ballets and dances. In a word, the gay society he did enjoy was the cause of this, that whereas he had purposed to tarry but a fortnight, we were there for a good six weeks. Nor were we in any wise irked thereby, for we had likewise gotten us mistresses no less than our General. Nay! we had certainly remained longer still, had not a courier come from the King, bringing him news of the breaking out of the war in Spain. For this cause he had to weigh anchor and carry his galleys from the Eastern shore to the Western, though in fact they did not cross over till eight months later.

So had we to take leave of all these delightful pleasures, and quit the good and gracious town of Naples; and truly 'twas not without great sadness and many regrets to our General and all of us, but we were right sorry to leave a place where we had been so happy.

At the end of some six years, or mayhap longer, when

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we were on our way to the succour of Malta, I was again at Naples and did make enquiry if the aforesaid fair lady were yet alive. I was told yes! and that she was in that town. Instantly I made a point of going to see her; and was immediately recognized by an old seneschal of her house, which did away to tell his mistress that I was fain to kiss her hands. She, remembering my name of Bourdeille, did summon me up to her chamber to see her. I found her keeping her bed, by reason of a slight rash she had on one of her cheeks. She did make me, I swear, a right excellent welcome. I did find her very little changed, and still so handsome a woman she might well have made any man commit a mortal sin, whether in will or deed.

She did ask me eagerly for news of my late General the Grand Prior, and lovingly, and how he had died; and saying she had been told how that he had been poisoned, did curse an hundred times over the wretch that had done the deed. I told her 'twas not so, and bade her disabuse her fancy of any such idea, informing her how he had died really of a treacherous and secret pleurisy he had caught at the battle of Dreux, where he had fought like a Caesar all day long. But at evening, after the last charge, being greatly heated by fight and a-sweat, and then withdrawing on a night of the most bitter hard frost, he was chilled to the bone. He did conceal his sickness, and died of it a month or six weeks afterward.

She did manifest, both by words and manner, her deep regret for him. And note now, two or three years before this, he had despatched two galleys on a freebooting expedition under the charge of Captain Beaulieu, one of the Lieutenants of his galleys. He had adopted the flag of the Queen of Scots, one which had never been seen or

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known in the Eastern seas, and which did cause folk much amaze; for 'twas out of the question to take that of France, because of the alliance with the Turks. Now the Grand Prior had given orders to the said Captain Beaulieu to land at Naples and pay a visit on his behalf to the Marquise de Gouast and her daughters, to which three ladies he did send by his hand an host of presents, all the little novelties then in vogue at the Court and Palace, in Paris and in France generally. Indeed this same noble Grand Prior was ever the soul of generosity and magnificence. This task Captain Beaulieu did not fail to perform, and did present all his master's gifts; himself was most excellently received, and rewarded by a fine present for his mission.

The Marquise did feel such obligation for these gifts and for that he had continued to remember her, that she did tell me again and again how gratified she had been and how she had loved him yet more than afore for his goodness. Again for love of him, she did a graceful courtesy to a gentleman of Gascony, which was at that time an officer in the galleys of the Grand Prior. This gentleman was left behind, when we set sail, sick unto death. But so kind was fortune to him, that addressing himself to the said lady in his adversity, he was so well succoured of her that his life was saved. She did take him in her household, and did serve him so well, as that a Captaincy falling vacant in one of her Castles, she did bestow the same on him, and procured him to marry a rich wife to boot.

None of the rest of us were aware what had become of the poor gentleman, and we deemed him dead. But lo! at the time of this latter voyage to Malta, there was amongst

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us a gentleman, younger brother of him I spake of, which did one day in heedless talk tell me of the main occasion for his going abroad. This he said was to seek news of a brother of his that had formerly been in the service of the Grand Prior, and had tarried behind sick at Naples more than six years before and had never been heard of since. Then did I bethink me, and presently did make enquiry for news of him of the folk belonging to the Marquise. These told me of his good fortune, and I did at once inform the younger brother. The latter did thank me very heartily, and accompanied me to pay his respects to the said lady, who did take him into great favour also, and went to visit him at his lodging.

Truly a pretty gratitude and remembrance of a friendship of old days,—which remembrance she did still cherish, as I have said. For she did make me even better cheer than before, and did entertain me with tales of the old happy time and many other subjects,—all which did make me to find her company very pleasant and agreeable. For she was of a good intelligence and bright wit, and an excellent talker.

She did beseech me an hundred times over to take no other lodging or meal but with her; but to this I would never consent, it not being my nature ever to be importunate or self-seeking. But I did use to go and visit her every day for the seven or eight days we did tarry there, and I was always most welcome, and her chamber ever open to me without any difficulty.

When at last I bade her adieu, she did give me letters of recommendation to her son, the Marquis de Pescaire, General at that time in the Spanish army. Besides which, she did make me promise that on my return I would come



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to see her, and take up my lodging in no other house but hers.

However so great was my ill luck that the galleys which did carry us did land us only at Terracina, from whence we hied to Rome, and I was unable to retrace my steps. Moreover I was fain at that time to join the wars in Hungary; but being at Venice, we did learn the death of the great Sultan Soliman. 'Twas there I did curse my luck an hundred times over, for that I had not anyhow returned to Naples, where I should have passed my time to advantage. Indeed it may well be, that by favour of my lady the Marquise I should there have found some good fortune, whether by marriage or otherwise. For she did certainly do me the honour to like me well.

I suppose my evil destiny willed it not so, but was determined to take me back again to France to be for ever unfortunate there. In this hath dame Fortune never showed me a favourable countenance, except only so far as appearances go and a fair repute as a good and gallant man of worth and honour. Yet goods and rank have I never gotten like sundry of my comrades,—and even some of our lower estate, men I have known which would have deemed themselves happy if I had but spoke to them in a courtyard, or King's or Queen's apartment, or in hall, though only aside and over the shoulder. Yet to-day I do see these same fellows advanced and grown exceeding big with the rapidity of pumpkins,—though indeed I do make but light of them and hold them no greater than myself and would not defer to any of them by so much as the length of my nail.

Well, well! I may herein apply to myself the word which our Redeemer Jesus Christ did pronounce out of

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LIVES OF FAIR AND GALLANT LADIES

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his own mouth, "a prophet hath no honour in his own country." Mayhap had I served foreign Princes as well as I have done mine own, and sought adventure among them as I have among those of our land, I should now be more laden with wealth and dignities than I actually am with years and vexations. Patience! if 'tis my Fate hath spun it so, I do curse the jade; if 'tis my Princes be to blame, I do give them to all the devils, an if they be not there already!

This doth end my account of this most honourable lady. She is dead, with an excellent repute as having been a right fair noble dame and having left behind her a good and generous line, as the Marquis eldest son, Don Juan, Don Carlos, Don Cæsar d'Avalos, all which myself have seen and have spoke of them elsewhere. The daughters no less have followed in their brothers' steps. And herewith I do terminate the main thread of my principal Discourse.



## NOTES AND APPENDICES







## BIBLIOGRAPHY

(This list is simply a selection from the many editions of the works of Brantôme in French and German. There are also texts in Spanish and Italian. A complete bibliography would fill many pages and would not be essential to the present text.)

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—Leyde, 1666, chez Sambix le jeune, 2 vol. in-12. Le titre portait. *"Vies des dames galantes."*

—Leyde, 1666, chez Jean de la Tourterelle, 2 vol. in-12. Le titre portait. *"Mémoires de messire Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme, contenant les vies des dames galantes de son temps."*

—Leyde, 1722, chez Jean de la Tourterelle, 2 vol. in-12. Titre rouge et noir. Même titre que dans l'édition précédente et mêmes fautes.

—Londres, 1739, Wood et S. Palmer, 2 vol. in-12, titre rouge et noir. *"Mémoires de messire Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme, contenant les vies des dames galantes de son temps."* Édition copiée sur les précédentes.

—La Haye, 1740, 15 vol. in-12. Cette édition est de Le Duchat, Lancelot et Prosper Marchand, et les remarques critiques ont servi aux éditions postérieures.

—Londres, 1779, aux dépens du libraire, 15 vol. in-8°. *"Œuvres du seigneur de Brantôme, nouvelle édition considérablement augmentée, accompagnée de remarques historiques et critiques et distribuée, dans un meilleur ordre."* Les *Dames galantes* occupent les tomes III et IV.

—Paris, 1822, Foucault, 8 vol. in-8°. *"Œuvres complètes"*

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du seigneur de Brantôme, accompagnées de remarques historiques et critiques. Nouvelle édition collationnée sur les manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du Roi." (Monmerqué). Les *Dames galantes* occupent le VII<sup>e</sup> vol.

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Cette édition est la première qui indique les sources auxquelles Brantôme a puisé ses historiettes. M. Lalanne n'a laissé aucun assage sans une explication toujours courte et toujours substantielle.

—L'Œuvre du Seigneur de Brantôme. "*Vie des Dames galantes.*" Introduction and notes by B. de Villeneuve. Paris, 1918.

—*Les Dames galantes.* Publiées d'après les manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale, par Henri Bouchot. 2 vols. E. Flammarion. Paris. (A very fine edition.)

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## APPENDIX—A

BRANTÔME: By ARTHUR TILLEY

Like Montaigne, Brantôme pretended to be careless of literary fame, but in reality took every pains to secure it; like Montaigne he loved digressions, *gaillardes escapades*, from his main theme; like Montaigne he has drawn for us, though in his case unconsciously, a portrait of himself; like Montaigne he was curious of information, fond of travel and books. But these points of similarity are after all superficial; the difference is fundamental. While Montaigne tested the world and society by the light of his shrewd common sense, Brantôme accepted them without question or reflexion. Montaigne was essentially a thinker, Brantôme was merely a reporter; Montaigne was a moralist, for Brantôme the word morality had no meaning. Montaigne criticised his age, Brantôme reflected it. That indeed is Brantôme's chief value, that he reflects his age like a mirror, but it must be added that he reflects chiefly its more trivial, not to say its more scandalous side. He is the Suetonius of the French Renaissance.

Pierre de Bourdeille, "reverend father in God, abbe de Brantôme," belonged to a noble and ancient family of Perigord. The precise date of his birth is uncertain, but it must be placed somewhere between 1539 and 1542. He spent his childhood with his grandmother, Louise de Vivonne, wife of the seneschal of Poitou, at the court of Margaret of Navarre, and after studying first at Paris and then at Poitiers, travelled for more than a year in Italy, returning to France at the beginning of 1560, when he made his first appearance at the court. Though he already held other benefices besides the

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abbey from which he took his title, he was not in orders. The next fourteen years were spent by him either in fighting on the Catholic side in the religious wars, or in attendance at the court, or in travel. In 1574 his military career came to an end, for his duties as gentleman of the chamber, to which post he had been appointed in 1568, kept him at court, frivolous, idle, and discontented. At last the refusal of Henry III. to bestow on him the promised post of governor of Périgord filled him with such fury that he determined to enter the service of Spain. But a fall from his horse, which kept him in bed for four years (1583-1587), saved him from being a renegade to his country and turned him into a man of letters.

For it was during this forced inactivity, apparently in 1584, that he began his literary labours, which he continued for the next thirty years, most of which he spent on his estate. He died in 1614, leaving a will of portentous length, in which, among other things, he charged his heirs to have his works printed *en belle et grand lettre et grand volume*. The charge was neglected, and it was not till 1665-1666 that an incomplete and defective edition was published at Leyden, in the Elzevir form. Previous to this, however, several copies had been made of his manuscripts, and Le Laboureur in his edition of Castelnau's *Memoirs*, published in 1659, had printed long extracts.

Brantôme was a disappointed man when he wrote his memoirs. He had been an assiduous courtier for a quarter of a century and had gained nothing by it, while he had seen men whose merits he believed to be inferior to his rise to wealth and honour. But though he had the love of frivolity and the moral indifference of a true courtier, he had not his pliability. "He was violent," says Le Laboureur, "difficult to live with and of a too unforgiving spirit." Perhaps the best thing that can be said in his favour is that among his most intimate friends were two of the most virtuous characters of their time, Téligny, the son-in-law of Coligny, and Téligny's

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brother-in-law, François de la Noue. Among his other friends were Louis de Berenger, seigneur du Guast, who was assassinated by order of Marguerite de Valois, and above all Filippo Strozzi, the son of Piero Strozzi, who was his friend for over twenty years, and who exercised over him considerable influence.

The names by which Brantôme's writings are generally known are not those which he himself gave them. Thus the titles *Dames illustres* and *Dames galantes* are an invention of the Leyden publisher for the *Premier et Second livre des Dames*. The other main division of his writings, *Hommes*, consisted in Brantôme's manuscript of two volumes, the first containing the *Grands capitaines*, French and Spanish, and the second *Les couronnels, Discours sur les duels, Rodomontades espagnoles*, and a separate account of La Noue. His original manuscript was completed while Margaret was still the wife of Henry IV., that is to say before November, 1599, but some time after her divorce he made a carefully revised copy. It is upon this copy that the text of M. Lalande's edition is based for the first five volumes.

Regarded strictly as biographies Brantôme's lives have slender merit, for the majority give one little or no idea of the character of the persons treated. He is at least successful with those who had in them elements of real greatness, such as Coligny and Condé. Even the long life of François de Guise, though it contains some interesting and valuable information, throws little light on Guise himself. But he gives us good superficial portraits of Charles IX., Catharine de Medici, and the Constable de Montmorency, while several of the minor lives, such as Brissac and his brother Cosse, Matignon, and Mary of Hungary, are not only amusing but hit off the characters with considerable success. One of the most entertaining is the unfinished account of his father. On the other hand the account of Margaret of Valois, though it contains some interesting details, is too ecstatic in its open-

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mouthed admiration to have any value as a biography. The conclusion of the account of Monluc may be quoted not only for its reference to Monluc's conversational powers, but as throwing light on Brantôme's own character.

Much of the interest of Brantôme's book is to be found in his numerous digressions, for which he is constantly apologising. Thus in the middle of the account of Montmorency we have a laudatory sketch of Michel de l'Hospital, in that of Tavannes a digression on the order of St. Michael, in that of Bellegarde an account of his own treatment by Henry III. The digressions are frequently made occasions for amusing stories, which, like Montaigne's, are distinguished from such as Bouchet and Beroalde de Verville collected, in that they generally illustrate some trait of human character.

Like Montaigne again, Brantôme copies freely and without acknowledgment from books. Whole pages are taken from *Le loyal serviteur*, stories are borrowed from Rabelais, Des Periers, and the *Heptameron*, as well as from most of the writers dealt with in the last chapter. But Brantôme, unlike Montaigne, tries to conceal his thefts by judicious alterations, or by pretending that he heard the story himself, or even that he was a witness of the event related. *J'ai ouy conter* and *J'ai vu* are frequently in his mouth. He was doubtless chiefly influenced in these endeavours to conceal his borrowings by the same form of vanity as Montaigne, the desire to be regarded, not as a man of letters, but as a gentleman who amused himself by putting down his reminiscences on paper. It is for this reason that he tries to give a negligent and conversational air to his style. The result is that he is often ungrammatical and sometimes obscure. Yet his style, at any rate in the eyes of a foreigner, has considerable merit, and chiefly from its power of vivid presentment. For Brantôme, like other Gascons, like Montaigne and Monluc and Henry IV., saw things vividly and can make his readers see them. He has a store of expressive words and phrases such as *un pre*

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*hommasse* (of Mary of Hungary). A noticeable feature of his style is his love of Italian and Spanish words, reflecting in this, as in other features, the prevailing fashion of the Court.

Brantôme's keen enjoyment of the world pageantry was seldom disturbed by inconvenient reflexion. His only quarrel with society was that the ruling powers were blind to his own merits. He thought the duel, even in the treacherous and bloodthirsty fashion in which it was then carried on, an excellent institution, and at the end of his account of Coligny he inserts an elaborate disquisition on the material benefits which the religious wars had conferred on France. All classes had profited, nobles, clergy, magistrates, merchants, artisans.

And all this is said in sober earnest, without a suspicion of irony. One might at any rate give Brantôme credit for originality had he not told us at the outset that this was the substance of a conversation which he overheard at Court between two great persons, one a soldier and the other a statesman, and both excellent Catholics. Brantôme was the echo as well as the mirror of the Court.

Brantôme's glowing panegyric on Margaret of Valois induced that virtuous princess to write her memoirs, partly in order to supplement his account of her, partly to correct a few errors into which he had fallen. It is to Brantôme accordingly that her memoirs are addressed. They were written about the year 1597 in the château of Usson in Auvergne, where she had resided, nominally as a prisoner, since 1587.

[From *The Literature of the French Renaissance*, Vol. II. 1904.]

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## APPENDIX—B

BRANTÔME: By GEORGE SAINTSBURY

The complement and counterpart of this moralising<sup>1</sup> on human business and pleasure is necessarily to be found in chronicles of that business and that pleasure as actually pursued. In these the sixteenth century is extraordinarily rich. Correspondence had hardly yet attained the importance in French literature which it afterwards acquired, but professed history and, still more, personal memoirs were largely written. The name of Brantôme has been chosen as the central and representative name of this section of writers, because he is on the whole the most original and certainly the most famous of them. His work, moreover, has more than one point of resemblance to that of the great contemporary author (Montaigne) with whom he is linked at the head of this chapter. Brantôme neither wrote actual history nor directly personal memoirs, but desultory biographical essays, forming a curious and perhaps designed pendant to the desultory moral essays of his neighbour Montaigne. Around him rank many writers, some historians pure and simple, some memoir-writers pure and simple, of whom not a few approach him in literary genius, and surpass him in correctness and finish of style, while almost all exceed him in whatever advantage may be derived from uniformity of plan, and from regard to the decencies of literature.

Pierre de Bourdeille (s) (who derived the name by which he is, and indeed was during his lifetime, generally known from an abbacy given to him by Henri II. when he was still a boy) was born about 1540, in the province of Perigord, but

<sup>1</sup> Referring to Montaigne's *Essays*.

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the exact date and place of his birth have not been ascertained. He was the third son of François, Comte de Bourdeilles, and his mother, Anne de Vivonne de la Chataigneraie, was the sister of the famous duelist whose encounter with Jarnac his nephew has described in a well-known passage. In the court of Marguerite d'Angouleme, the literary nursery of so great a part of the talent of France at this time, he passed his early youth, went to school at Paris and at Poitiers, and was made Abbé de Brantôme at the age of sixteen. He was thus sufficiently provided for, and he never took any orders, but was a courtier and a soldier throughout the whole of his active life. Indeed almost the first use he made of his benefice was to equip himself and a respectable suite for a journey into Italy, where he served under the Marechal de Brissac. He accompanied Mary Stuart to Scotland, served in the Spanish army in Africa, volunteered for the relief of Malta from the Turks, and again for the expedition destined to assist Hungary against Soliman, and in other ways led the life of a knight-errant. The religious wars in his own country gave him plenty of employment; but in the reigns of Charles IX. and Henri III. he was more particularly attached to the suite of the queen dowager and her daughter Marguerite. He was, however, somewhat disappointed in his hopes of recompense; and after hesitating for a time between the Royalists, the Leaguers, and the Spaniards, he left the court, retired into private life, and began to write memoirs, partly in consequence of a severe accident. He seems to have begun to write about 1594, and he lived for twenty years longer, dying on the 15th of July, 1614.

The form of Brantôme's works is, as has been said, peculiar. They are usually divided into two parts, dealing respectively with men and women. The first part in its turn consists of many subdivisions, the chief of which is made up of the *Vies des Grand Capitaines Etrangers et Français*, while others consist of separate disquisitions or essays, *Des Rodomontades*



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*Espagnoles*, "On some Duels and Challenges in France" and elsewhere, "On certain Retreats, and how they are sometimes better than Battles," etc. Of the part which is devoted to women the chief portion is the celebrated *Dames Galantes*, which is preceded by a series of *Vies des Dames Illustres*, matching the *Grands Capitaines*. The *Dames Galantes* is subdivided into eight discourses, with titles which smack of Montaigne. These discourses are, however, in reality little but a congerie of anecdotes, often scandalous enough. Besides these, his principal works, Brantôme left divers *Opuscula*, some of which are definitely literary, dealing chiefly with Lucan. None of his works were published in his lifetime, nor did any appear in print until 1659. Meanwhile manuscript copies had, as usual, been multiplied, with the result, also usual, that the text was much falsified and mutilated.

The great merit of Brantôme lies in the extraordinary vividness of his powers of literary presentment. His style is careless, though it is probable that the carelessness is not unstudied. But his irregular, brightly coloured, and easily flowing manner represents, as hardly any age has ever been represented, the characteristics of the great society of his time. It is needless to say that the morals of that time were utterly corrupt, but Brantôme accepts them with a placid complacency which is almost innocent. No writer, perhaps, has ever put things more disgraceful on paper; but no writer has ever written of such things in such a perfectly natural manner. Brantôme was in his way a hero-worshipper, though his heroes and heroines were sometimes oddly coupled. Bayard and Marguerite de Valois represent his ideals, and a good knight or a beautiful lady *de par le monde* can do no wrong. This unquestioning acceptance of, and belief in, the moral standards of his own society give a genuineness and a freshness to his work which are very rare in literature. Few writers, again, have had the knack of hitting off character,

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superficially it is true, yet with sufficient distinction, which Brantôme has. There is something individual about all the innumerable characters who move across his stage, and something thoroughly human about all, even the anonymous men and women, who appear for a moment as the actors in some too frequently discreditable scene. With all this there is a considerable vein of moralising in Brantôme which serves to throw up the relief of his actual narratives. He has sometimes been compared to Pepys, but, except in point of garrulity and of readiness to set down on paper anything that came into their heads, there is little likeness between the two. Brantôme was emphatically an *ecrivain* (unscholarly and Italianised as his phrase sometimes appears, if judged by the standards of a severer age), and some of the best passages from his works are among the most striking examples of French prose.

[From *A Short History of French Literature*. 6th Ed. Oxford. 1901.]



## NOTES TO VOLUME I

### HISTORICAL NOTE

P. V: The Duc d'Alençon was later called the Duc d'Anjou. He died at Château-Thierry, on Sunday, June 10, 1584, from dysentery, which had almost reduced him to a shadow. Nevers, in his *Mémoires* (Vol. I, p. 91), maintains that he was poisoned by a maid of one of his mistresses. According to L'Estolle's account, the Duke was given a magnificent funeral in Paris. He was by no means handsome; his pimpled and deformed nose earned for him an epigram during his expedition in Flanders:

Flamands, ne soyez estonnes  
Si à François voyez deux nez:  
Car par droit, raison et usage,  
Faut deux nez à double visage.

P. VIII: Pierre de Bourdelle, Seigneur de l'Abbaye de Brantôme. Was born in Périgord, 1527; died 1614. Of an old and distinguished family. Served his apprenticeship to war under the famous Captain François de Guise. Later Gentleman of the Chamber to two French Kings in succession, Charles IX. and Henri III., being high in favour with the latter; Chamberlain to the Duc d'Alençon. As soldier or traveller visited most parts of Europe; intimate with many of the most famous men of his day, including the poet Ronsard. Some time after the death of Charles IX. he retired (disappointed apparently by a diminution of Court favour, and suffering from the results of a serious accident due to a fall from his horse) to his estates in Guyenne, where he employed his leisure in the composition of a number of voluminous works based on reminiscences of the active period of his life.

These are:

*Vies des Hommes illustres et grands Capitaines français,*  
*Vies des Grands Capitaines étrangers,*  
*Vies des Dames illustres,*  
*Vies des Dames galantes,*  
*Anecdotes touchant des Duels,*  
*Rodomontades et Jurements espagnols,*  
and sundry fragments.

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P. XXII:

Souvent femme varie,  
Bien fol qui s'y fie!

(Woman is changing ever; fool the man who trusts her!)

P. 3: The word which Molière popularized does not date from that time; it was used much earlier, and in the thirteenth century we see a man pay a fine of twenty ounces of gold for calling an unfortunate husband *coucous* (cuckold). (*Usaticæ regni Majoris, Anno 1248.*) About the middle of the fifteenth century, in a letter of remission to a guilty fellow, we find this curious remark: "*Ogeul*, which is the same (in the vernacular) as *coulz* or *couppault*, is one of the vilest insults to be thrust at a married man." At times the word *coux* was used:

Suis-je mis en la confrairie  
Saint Arnoul le seigneur des Coux.

But it was just about the fifteenth century that the confusion appeared between this word and the bird of April (cuckoo); the word *coucous* (cuckoo), which had been explained by a fable, merely imitated the cry, whereas the word *coux* (cuckold) had been derived from the early Low Latin *cugus*. "Couquou, thus named after its manner of singing and because it is famed for laying its eggs in the nests of other birds; so, inconsistently, he is called a *coux* (cuckold) in whose nest another man comes." (Bouchet, *Serées*.) There is also a play by Passerat on the metamorphosis of a cuckoo which is worth mentioning. (Bib. Nat., manuscrit français, 22565, f° 24 v°.)

P. 4: In the present work the Author constantly uses the words *belle et honnête* (fair and honourable) to describe such and such a lady, of whom at the same time he speaks as being an unmitigated whore. But when he adds, as he does sometimes, *vertueuse* (virtuous) to *belle et honnête*, he implies by this that the lady was chaste and modest, and raised no talk about herself.

P. 7: The prothonotary Baraud was one of those churchmen of whom Brantôme says elsewhere: "It was customary at the time that prothonotaries, even those of good families, should scarcely be learned, but give themselves up to pleasure," etc.

P. 10: Cosimo de Medici, who had his wife Eleonora de Toledo poisoned. The daughter of whom Brantôme speaks was Isabella,

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whom he married to Paolo Orsini, the Duke of Bracciano. But Cosimo had too marked an affection for this daughter; although she was married, he insisted that she live in Florence and remain with him. Vasari, who painted for the Medici one of the arches of the Palazzo Vecchio, one day surprised the father and the daughter, and recounts the strange adventure which he witnessed. After the death of Cosimo, Paolo Orsini called Isabella to his apartment, and there, according to Litta, "with a rope around her neck coldly strangled her on the night of July 16, 1576, in the act of consummating the marriage." (Medici, t. IV, tavola xiv.) That unhappy woman was one of the most marvellous of her time: beautiful, cultured, musical, she had all the brilliant advantages of the mind and of the body. Meanwhile, she had had as a lover Trollo Orsini, who was attached to her husband as a bodyguard, and who was assassinated in France, where he had retired.

P. 10: Louis de Clermont de Bussy d'Amboise was born towards the middle of the XVIth Century, and took an active part in the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew. On that occasion, profiting by the confusion, he murdered his kinsman Antoine de Clermont, with whom he was at law for the possession of the Marquisat de Renel. Having obtained from his patron the Duc d'Anjou the governorship of the Castle of Angers, he made himself the terror of the countryside. Letters of his addressed to the wife of the Comte de Montsoreau, whom he was endeavouring to seduce, having fallen into Charles IX.'s hands, were by him shown to the husband. The latter forced his wife to write a reply to her lover appointing a rendezvous. On his appearing there, Montsoreau and a band of armed men fell upon and despatched him (1579). The comment of the historian de Thou is in these words: "The entire Province was overjoyed at Bussy's death, while the Duke of Anjou himself was not sorry to be rid of him." [Transl.]

P. 11: René de Villequier, Baron de Clairvaux, murdered his first wife, Françoise de la Marck, in cold blood, in 1577 at the Castle of Poitiers, where the Court was residing. He killed at the same time a young girl who was holding a mirror before her mistress at the moment. According to some authorities he acted on the suggestion of the king, Henri III. At any rate he got off with absolute impunity, and within a very short time after was decorated by his Sovereign with the Order of the St. Esprit. [Transl.]

P. 12: Sampietro, the famous soldier of fortune, and commander

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of the Italian troops under the French Kings Francis I. and Henri II., was born near Ajaccio in Corsica in 1501. He was of humble birth, but his many brilliant feats of war made him celebrated throughout Europe. He actually strangled his wife,—Vanina, a lady of good family, but not in consequence of such misconduct on her part as Brantôme represents. The real circumstances were as follows. Sampietro having attempted to raise his Corsican compatriots in revolt against the Genoese, he was imprisoned and all but put to death by the latter. This roused in him so implacable a hatred of the Genoese State, that on learning that his wife during his absence at Constantinople had condescended to implore his pardon from the Genoese, he deliberately put her to death in the way described. He was himself eventually murdered, being treacherously stabbed in the back by his Lieutenant and friend Vitelli at the instigation of his Genoese enemies. [Transl.]

P. 12: This is another allusion to Paolo Orsini, Duke of Bracciano, who could not overtake Trollo Orsini, and killed Isabella that he might marry Vittoria Accoramboni, whose husband he had assassinated. (Litta, Orsini, t, VII, tav. XXIX.)

P. 15: The Avalos family originally came from Spain, and gave Italy the Marquis de Pescaire, one of the greatest captains of the sixteenth century. It is of him that Brantôme speaks as the *viceroy*. Maria d'Avalos was married to Carlos Gesualdo, prince of Venousse, and was the niece of this Marquis de Pescaire and of Del Guasto, whom Brantôme describes as "dameret" (foppish) to such a degree that he perfumed the saddles of his horses. He was the one who lost the battle of Cérisoles in 1544.

P. 16: Iliad, Bk. III, —

P. 16: Paul de Caussade de Saint-Mégrin, favorite of the king, was killed on leaving the Louvre by a band of assassins led by Mayenne. He was the lover of Catherine de Clèves, Duchess de Guise. Henri IV., then king of Navarre, who had good reasons not to like favorites, says apropos of this: "I am thankful to the Duc de Guise for refusing to tolerate that a bed favorite like Saint-Mégrin should make him a cuckold. This treatment ought to be meted out to all the little court gallants who try to approach the princesses with the aim of making love to them."

P. 17: Françoise de Saillon, married to Jacques de Rohan. She was saved by a miracle, says Jean Bourdigné's chronicle, in 1526.

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P. 17: Brantôme refers to Françoise de Foix, Chateaubriant's lady, regarding whom an old pamphlet of 1606 says as follows: "She could do what she desired, and she desired many things that she ought not to at all. During her lifetime, her husband was ever afflicted and tormented." (Factum pour M. le connestable contre Madame de Guise, 1606.) That is also the opinion of Gaillard in his *Histoire de Françoise Ier*, t. VII, p. 179, in the 1769 edition, who sees in this passage an allusion to Mme. de Chateaubriant.

P. 17: Jean de Bourdigné, author of *Histoire agrégative des Annales et Chroniques d'Anjou et du Maine* (Angers, 1529, fol.), was born at Angers. He was a priest and Canon of the Cathedral of his native town. The book is very rare; as a history it is almost worthless, being full of the wildest fables.

P. 17: Francis I. king of France, 1515-1547.

P. 21: Phillip II. had his wife Isabelle de Valois poisoned; he suspected her of adultery with Don Carlos, his son of a former marriage.

P. 22: Louis X., surnamed le Hutin, had caused his wife Marguerite de Bourgogne to be strangled at the Château-Gaillard. She had been imprisoned there in 1314. As to Gaston II., of Foix, outraged by the life of debauch Jeanne d'Artois (his mother) led, he obtained from Philippe de Valois an order of internment in 1381.

P. 22: Anne Boleyn, who was the cause of the Anglican schism. The king had had her beheaded because of her infidelity and married Jane Seymour. As to the charge of which Brantôme speaks, Henry VIII. was so keen on that matter that he had caused Catherine Howard to be beheaded because he had not been quite convinced of her virginity.

P. 23: Baldwyn II., cousin and successor of the first Baldwyn, king of Jerusalem, brother of Godfrey de Bouillon, reigned from 1119 to 1181. Brantôme is mistaken here. Baldwyn II. had married Morphie, daughter of Prince de Mélitine; but he had not been formerly married. Does he wish to speak of Baudoin Ire, who repudiated the daughter of the Prince d'Arménie and then Adèle de Monferrat? (Cf. Guillaume de Tyr, liv. II, c. xv.)

P. 23: Read *Melitene*; this is how the Ancients named this town,

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the modern name of which is *Meletia*, in Latin *Maletia*; in Armenia, on the Euphrates.

P. 23: *History of the Holy Land*; by William of Tyre.

P. 23: Louis VII. succeeded his father, Louis le Gros, on the throne of France 1137, and died 1180. His wife, whom he divorced soon after his return from the Holy Land, whither she had accompanied him, was Eleanore of Guennc. This divorce was very painful to Louis VII., surnamed le Jeune, because he had to give up the duchy of Aquitaine and cast off the beautiful equestrian seal which he had had engraved for himself in his rank as duke.

P. 24: Suetonius, *Cæsar*, Chap. VI. Brantôme is thinking of Clodius; but Cicero never made the speech in question.

P. 24: Brantôme (Lalanne edition, t. VIII, p. 198) repeats this anecdote without giving further details.

P. 25: Fulvia. (Sallust, Chap. XXIII.)

P. 25: Octavius (Augustus), first Roman Emperor, was the son of C. Octavius, by Atia, a daughter of Julia, the sister of Julius Cæsar. He was therefore the grand-nephew of the latter, the founder of the Empire and virtual, though not nominal, first Emperor. He married Livia after his divorce of Scribonia.

P. 26: Caligula, the third Roman Emperor, A. D. 37-41. His name was Caius Cæsar, Caligula being properly only a friendly nickname, "Little Boots," bestowed on him as a boy by the soldiers in his father, Germanicus' camp in Germany, where he was brought up. He was inordinately cruel and licentious and madly extravagant. Eventually murdered.

P. 26: Brantôme does not appear to know very well the persons he is speaking of here: Hostilla is Orestilla; Tullia is Lollia; Her-  
culalina is Urgulanilla.

P. 27: Claudius, the fourth Roman Emperor, A.D. 41-54. The notorious Messalina was his third wife. For a lurid picture of her immoralities see Juvenal's famous Sixth Satire.

P. 28: Giovanni Boccaccio, the author of the Decameron, was born



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at Paris in 1818, being the (illegitimate) son of a wealthy merchant of Florence. He died 1875 at Certaldo, a village near Florence, the original seat of the family.

P. 28: Does the following *chanson* refer to the same woman?

On void Simonne  
Proumener aux bordeaux  
Matin, soir, nonne,  
Avec ses macquereaux.  
(Bib. Nat., ms. français 22565, f° 41 v°.)

P. 28: This is indeed one of the most curious passages of the book, and I am glad to remove one of Lalande's doubts. Brantôme is really talking of a statue, an antique piece which was found July 21, 1594, in a field near the Saint-Martin priory. It had been admirably conserved. Unfortunately, Louis XIV. having claimed it later, it was placed on a barge which sank in the Garonne, and was never recovered. (O'Reilly, *History of Bordeaux*, 1868, Vol. II.) The statue is described as having had one breast uncovered and curled hair, a description that agrees only partly with Visconti's type (*Iconographie romaine*, t. II., planche 28), in which Messalina is not décolleté and carries her son. Was the Bordeaux statue indeed a Messalina?

P. 31: Brantôme is mistaken; Nero caused Octavia to be killed. (See Suetonius, *Nero*, Chap. XXXV.)

P. 31: Nero, fifth Roman Emperor, A. D. 54-68.

P. 31: Domitian succeeded his father Titus on the Imperial throne; reigned from A. D. 81 to 96.

P. 31: Pertinax, a man of peasant birth, but who had carved out for himself a distinguished career as soldier and administrator, was elected Emperor by the Prætorian Guards on the murder of Commodus, A. D. 193. Himself murdered after a two months' reign.

P. 32: Septimius Severus, Emperor from A.D. 193 to 211. He was a great general and conducted successful campaigns in Britain, where he died,—at York.

P. 33: Philippe Auguste, King of France 1180-1223. Philip Au-  
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gustus repudiated Ingeburga after twenty-eight days of marriage, and married Agnes de Méranie. The censure of the church induced the king to discard the second marriage and return to Ingeburga (1201). The latter was reputed to have a secret vice which greatly angered the king.

P. 84: Marguerite, daughter of the Archduke Maximilian, whom Charles VIII. rejected in order to marry Anne of Brittany (1491). Louis XII. turned away Jeanne in order to marry the widow of Charles VIII.

P. 84: Charles VIII., 1483-1498, of the House of Valois.

P. 84: Louis XII., successor of the last named, reigned 1498-1515, the immediate predecessor of Francis I.

P. 85: Alfonso V., king of Aragon, who left maxims which were collected by Antonio Beccadelli, surnamed Panormita.

P. 85: Twenty-second tale. M. de Bernage was equerry of King Charles VIII. and the lord of Civray, near Chenonceaux.

P. 36: It is not Semiramis, but Thomyris, who, according to Justin (Bk. I.) and Herodotus (Bk. II.), thrust the head of Cyrus into a vat of blood. Xenophon says, on the contrary, that Cyrus died a natural death.

P. 40: Albert de Gondy, Duke de Retz, was reputed as a practitioner of Aretino's principles. His wife, Claudine Catherine de Clermont, deserved, perhaps wrongfully, to occupy a place in the pamphlet entitled: "Bibliothèque de Mme. de Montpensier."

P. 41: Elephantis is referred to by Martial and Suetonius as the writer of amatory works—"molles Elephantidos libelli," but nothing is known of her otherwise. She was probably a Greek, not a Roman.

P. 41: Hellogabalus, or Elagabalus, Emperor from A. D. 218 to 222. Born at Emesa, and originally high-priest of Elagabalus the Syrian Sun-god. After a very short reign marked by every sort of extravagant folly, he was succeeded by Alexander Severus.

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P. 41: The Cardinal de Lorraine, Cardinal du Perron, and others, had been already represented in the same way along with Catherine de Medici, Mary Stuart and the Duchesse de Guise, in two paintings mentioned in the *Légende du Cardinal de Lorraine*, fol. 24, and in the *Réveille-Matin des Français*, pp. 11 and 128.

P. 42: I agree with Lalanne that this prince was no other than the Duke d'Alençon. As to the fable of the coupling of the lions, it came from an error of Aristotle, which was repeated by most naturalists until the eighteenth century.

P. 43: Ronsard the poet was born 1524, being the son of Louis de Ronsard, sieur de la Poissonnière, an officer in the household of King Francis I., and died 1586. He enjoyed an immense reputation in his lifetime, and was the favourite poet of Mary Queen of Scots. Her lover, the unfortunate Chastelard, read his *Hymns de la mort* on the scaffold, and refused any other book or confessor to prepare him for death. Originator and leading member of the famous *Pleiade* of Poets.

P. 46: He was a Florentine, Luigi di Ghiaceti, who had grown rich by negotiating the taxes with the king. He married the beautiful Mlle. d'Atri, and to please her he had bought for 400,000 francs the estate of Chateaufvillain. Mme. de Chateaufvillain was a model of virtue, if Brantôme is to be believed; but we wonder, fully agreeing with the author of the notes to the *Journal de Henri III.*, where this lady could have acquired her virtue—was it at the court or at her husband's estate? Besides this gallery of pictures which is mentioned here, Louis Adjecet (the French form for Luigi Ghiaceti) had mistresses with whom he indulged in the low appetites of rich upstarts. He was killed in 1598 by an officer; and his wife withdrew to Langres, where she lived with her children.

P. 47: Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, canto XLII., stanza 98.

Ecco un donzello a chi l'ufficio tocca  
 Por su la mensa un bel nappo d'or fino . . .

P. 47: Very likely Bernardin Turissan. Brantôme is perhaps referring to the *Ragionamento della Nanna*, printed in Paris in 1584, without the name of the publisher. The *peggio* must have been one of those infamous Italian books which the noblemen of the court wrangled over. The *Nanna* was well known at the French court

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(see *Le Divorce satyrique*, t. I. of the *Journal de Henri III.*, 1720 edition, p. 190).

P. 47: Bernardino Turisan, who used as his sign the well-known mark of the Manutii, his kinsmen.

P. 47: Pietro Aretino was born at Arezzo in Tuscany in 1492. The natural son of a plain gentleman he became the companion and protégé of Princes, and their unscrupulous and adroit flatterer. Friend of Michael Angelo and Titian. His works are full of learning and wit,—and obscenity.

P. 48: This book, entitled *La Somme des péchés et les remèdes d'iceux* (Compendium of all Sins, and the Remedies of the same), printed at Lyons, by Charles Pesnot c. 1584, 4to, and several times since, was compiled by Jean Benedict, a Cordelier monk of Brittany. He has filled it with filth and foulness as full as did the Jesuit Sanchez his treatise *De Matrimonio* (on Marriage). It is a singular fact that a work so indecent should have been none the less dedicated to the Holy Virgin. As we see from the text, Brantôme and his fellows quite well understood how to turn such works to their advantage and find fresh stories of lubricity in their pages.

P. 49: This Bonvisi, a Lyons banker, had had as receiver Field Marshal de Retz, the son of a Gondl, who had become a bankrupt in Lyons. (Notes of the Confession de Sancy, 1720 edition, t. II., p. 244.)

P. 51: L. Aurelius Commodus (not Sejanus), Emperor A. D. 180-192, was the son of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius and Faustina. Annus Verus was his brother, and received the appellation of *Cæsar* along with his elder brother in 166.

P. 58: *Antonomasia*, properly.

P. 60: The Sanzays were a family of Poitou who had settled in Brittany. René de Sanzay, head of the family at the time in question, had four sons: René, Christophe, Claude, and Charles. René continued the line. Claude was his lieutenant in 1569, as colonel of his forces. Charles married and died only in 1646 (?). Christophe, the second son, was a prothonotary. It seems that Brantôme had Claude in mind. Moreover, the constable of Montmorency having died in 1568 and Claude having been a lieutenant of his brother in 1569, we may conjecture that the adventure of which Brantôme speaks had

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happened to him previously, for the constable is concerned with his ransom. (Bib. Nat., Cabinet des titres, art. Sansay.)

P. 61: Cicero, *De officiis*, Bk. IV., Chap. ix.

P. 61: The second son of Charles V.; he was assassinated at the Gate of Barbette, at the end of Rue Vieille-du-Temple, in 1407, by the orders of Jean Sans peur. He had had for a long time adulterous relations with his sister-in-law Isabeau de Bavière. The woman in question here was Marie d'Enghien, wife of Aubert de Cany and mother of the Bâtard d'Orléans. This anecdote has inspired several story-tellers, such as Bandello, Strappardo, Malespini, etc. See also the first of the *Cents Nouvelles nouvelles*.

P. 61: "Candaules was the last Heracleid king of Lydia. According to the account of Herodotus, he was extremely proud of his wife's beauty, and insisted on exhibiting her unveiled charms, but without her knowledge, to Gyges, his favourite officer. Gyges was seen by the queen, as he was stealing from her chamber, and the next day she summoned him before her, intent on vengeance, and bade him choose whether he would undergo the punishment of death himself, or would consent to murder Candaules and receive the kingdom together with her hand. He chose the latter alternative, and became the founder of the dynasty of the Mermnadæ, about B. C. 715."

P. 62: Jean Dunois, comte d'Orléans et de Longueville, Grand Chamberlain of France, was his natural son by Mariette d'Enghien, wife of Aubert de Cany-Dunois, and is famous in history under the name of the Bastard of Orleans. Born at Paris 1402; died 1468. Distinguished himself at the sieges of Montargis and Orleans (where he was seconded by Jeanne d'Arc) and in many other encounters. The gallant champion of Charles VII. and the great enemy of the English.

P. 65. Henri III., 1574-1589, last king of the House of Valois; succeeded Charles IX.

P. 65: Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy, surnamed *Tête de fer*. He had married Marguerite, sister of Henri II. It was during this journey that the Duchess Marguerite tried to obtain from her nephew Henri III. the retrocession of several fortresses which France still held. (Litta, t. VI., tav. xiv.)

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P. 66: Sainte-Soline abandoned Stromi at the battle of the Hes Ter Tercères.

P. 67. Capaneus was one of the mythical seven heroes who marched from Argos against Thebes (Aeschylus, *Septem contra Thebas*). "During the siege, he was presumptuous enough to say, that even the fire of Zeus should not prevent his scaling the walls of the city; but when she saw his body was burning, his wife Eudamé leaped into the flames and destroyed herself."

P. 67: Alcestis was a daughter of Pellas, and the wife of Admetus, King of Phœæ in Thessaly. According to the legend, Apollo having induced the Fates to promise Admetus deliverance from death, if at the hour of his decease his father, mother or wife would die for him, Alcestis sacrificed herself for her husband's sake. But Heracles brought her back again from the underworld, and "all ended well." The story is the subject of Euripides' beautiful play of *Alceste*.

P. 68: Tancred, one of the chief heroes of the First Crusade, was the son of Odo the Good, of Sicily. Date of his birth is uncertain; he died 1112. Type of the gallant soldier and adventurer and the "very perfect, gentle knight."

P. 68: Philippe I.—1060-1108.

P. 68: See Guillaume de Tyr, liv. XI., who tells this anecdote about Tancrede. Bertrade d'Anjou, the wife of Foulques, had been carried off by Philip I., to whom she bore, among other children, Cécile, who married Tancrede.

P. 68: Compare this Albanian savagery with the story of Councillor Jean Lavoix, who lived with the wife of an attorney named Boulanger. The wife having decided to discontinue that liaison, the Councillor grew so furious that he caused her to be slashed and disfigured, although he could not get her nose cut off. He was pardoned after having paid his judges. The following song was written about him:

Chasteauvillain, Poisle et Levois,  
Seront juges tous d'une voix  
Par un arrest aussi léger  
Que fust celluy de Saint-Leger.  
Car le malheur est tel en France  
Que tout se juge par la finance.

(Bib. Nat., ms. français, 22563, f° 101.)

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P. 70: See the *Annales d'Aquitaine*, t.<sup>o</sup> 140 v.<sup>o</sup>.—Jeanne de Montal, married to Charles d'Aubusson, lord of La Borne. This Charles had had a liaison with the prioress of Blessac, who bore him four children. He was tried for theft and robbery in the convents of his vicinity, and hanged, February 23, 1588. (Anselme, t. V., p. 885.) A genealogy by Pierre Robert states precisely what Brantôme records here.

P. 70: See Brantôme in the Lalanne edition, t. VIII., p. 148. There must be some mistake here. Jacques d'Aragon, the titular king of Majorca, died in an expedition in 1375, according to the *Art de vérifier les dates*.

P. 70: Charles VII. (surnamed the Victorious), crowned at Poitiers 1422, consecrated at Rheims 1429; died 1461, the King for whom Jeanne d'Arc fought against the Burgundians and English, and who really owed his crown to her.

P. 70: Francis I., 1515-1547.

P. 70: Jeanne I., Queen of Naples, 1383-1381, daughter of Charles Duke of Calabria and grand-daughter of the wise King Robert of Naples.

P. 72: The proverb says, the ferret. It should be the ermine, which animal is said to allow itself to be caught rather than soil itself.

P. 72: The opinion that the female ferret would die if it did not find a male to satisfy her during the mating season was still held by naturalists at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Lalanne is mistaken about the ermine, which, on the contrary, dies of the slightest contamination:

Et moi, je suis si délicate  
Qu'une tache me fait mourir.  
(Florian, *Fables*, liv. III., fab. xiii.)

P. 78: Nouvelle III.

P. 78: Unhappy husbands were classified as follows:

Celluy qui, marié, par sa femme est coqu  
Et (qui) pas ne le sçait, d'une corne est cornu.

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Deux en a cestui-là qui peut dissimuler;  
Qui le voit et le souffre, icelluy trois en porte;  
Et quatre cestui-là qui meine pour culler  
Chez lui des poursuivans. Cil qui en toute sorte  
Dit qu'il n'est de ceux-là, et en sa femme croïd,  
Cinq cornes pour certain sur le front on lui void.  
(Bib. Nat., ms. français 22565, f° 41.)

P. 79: It was the marriage of Marguerite of France, the Duchess de Savoie, to Emmanuel Philibert, the Duke de Savoie, which caused the army to grumble.

P. 79: Boccaccio, Seventh tale of the second day.

P. 79: Brantôme alludes here most likely to Marguerite of France, sister of Henri II., who was 45 when she married the Duke of Savoy.

P. 80: Mlle. de Limeuil was the mistress of the Prince de Condé. During the journey of the court at Lyons, in July, 1564, she was confined in the cabinet of the queen mother, who was so furious that she had her locked up in a Franciscan monastery at Auxonne. But the *Confession de Sancy* and several authors of that time differ from Brantôme in saying that the child was a son and not a daughter, and died immediately after birth. The Huguenots wrote verses about the adventure; but the young lady nevertheless married an Italian, Scipion Sardini, for whom she soon forgot the Prince de Condé. Mlle. de Limeuil called herself Isabelle de La Tour de Turenne, and was Dame de Limeuil.

P. 81: Cosimo I, Duke of Tuscany. Besides, Pope Alexander VI. was also in a somewhat similar situation.

P. 82: Ferdinand II., King of Naples, 1495-96. Died prematurely at the age of 26. Ferdinand II. married the sister of his father, the daughter of the king of Naples and not of Castile.

P. 86: An ancient city of Italy. At the fort of Monte Cimino, in the Campagna 40 miles NN W. of Rome.

P. 86: *La Nanna* by Aretino, in the chapter on married women, tells of similar practices of deception regarding the virtue of newly married women.



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P. 89: Henry IV. of Castile, 1454-1474, a feeble and dissipated Prince, was a brother of Isabelle of Castile. The young man chosen was not a nobleman, but simply an Antinous of negligible origin whom the king created Duke d'Albuquerque. A child, Jeanne, was born of this complacent match, but she did not reign. Castile preferred Henri III.'s sister, Isabelle.

P. 89: Fulgosius (Battista Fregose), born at Genoa 1440, of a family famous in Genoese history, and for a time Doge of his native City. His chief Work, *Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium libri IX.* (Memorable Deeds and Words, 9 bks.), has been more than once reprinted. This particular statement is to be found in ch. 8. of Bk. IX.

P. 91: We have here, perhaps, a discreet allusion to Henri IV.'s passion for Mlle. de Tignonville, who had been unmanageable until she married. (See the *Confession de Sancy*, and t. II., p. 128, of the *Journal de Henri III.*)

P. 94: François de Lorraine, Duc de Guise, who was killed by Poltrot.

P. 96: The famous Diane de Poitiers, eldest daughter of Jean de Poitiers, Seigneur de St. Vallier, belonging to one of the most ancient families in Dauphiné, was born 1499. At the age of 18 she was married to Louis de Brêze, Comte de Maulevrier, Grand Seneschal of Normandy. She became a widow in 1581. The story of François I. having pardoned her father at the price of her honour, as told by Brantôme and others, is apparently apocryphal. It was not till after the death of her husband, to whom she was faithful and whose name she honoured, that she became the mistress of François I. She was as renowned for her wit and charms of mind as for her beauty. Died 1566.

P. 96: M. de Saint-Vallier, father of Diane de Poitiers. It is not known whether he uttered the word, but his pardon came in time. The headsman had already begged his pardon, according to custom, for killing him, and was about to cut his head off when a clerk, Mathieu Delot, rose and read the royal letter which commuted the capital sentence to imprisonment. The letter is dated February 17, 1523. (Ms. Saint-Germain, 1556, f° 74.)

P. 97: Duke d'Etampes, chevalier of the order and governor of

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Brittany, an obliging and kind husband.—François de Vivonne, lord of La Chasteignerale, was among the least meek-minded of the court. Princess de La Roche-sur-Yon having stupidly asked him one day for a domestic favor, he called her "a little muddy princess," which afforded King Francis I. no little laughter. He was killed by Jarnac in a famous duel.

P. 98: An allusion to the demon who threw to the ground the archangel Saint Michael, and who was represented on the collar of the order. It is rather difficult to know of which lady Brantôme is speaking here: the collar of Saint Michael had been given to so many people that it was called "the collar for all animals." (Castelnau, *Mémoires*, I., p. 363.)

P. 99: Where did Brantôme get this story? Gui de Châtillon had expended on banquets the greater part of his fortune and sold his county to Louis d'Orléans; the latter was merely seventeen at the time. It is difficult to admit that he could have carried on a liaison with a woman so ripe in years. After the death of Gui, Marguerite married an officer of the Duke d'Orléans.

P. 101: Apparently Queen Marguerite de Valois. Marguerite de Valois, sister of François I., was born at Angoulême in 1492. Married in 1509 to Charles 4th Duc d'Alençon, who died (1525) soon after the disastrous battle of Pavia, at which François I. was taken prisoner. In 1527 she married Henri d'Albret, king of Navarre. She was a Princess of many talents and accomplishments, and the delight of her brother François I., who called her his *Mignonne*, and his *Marguerite des Marguerites*; Du Bellay and Clément Marot were both members of her literary coterie. Authoress of the famous *Heptameron*, or *Nouvelles de la Reine de Navarre*, composed in imitation of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Died 1549.

P. 101: This is also an allusion to Queen Marguerite. Martigues, one of her lovers, had received from her a scarf and a little dog which he wore at the tournaments.

P. 103: Henri III., who had a short-lived affair with Catherine Charlotte de La Tremoille, the wife of Prince de Condé. But the victory was too easy; the princess was quite corrupt. Later on, the king prostituted her with one of his pages, with whom she conspired to poison her husband. The plot failed. When brought before the Court, she was pardoned; but a servant named Brilland was torn

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apart by four horses. It was also Henri III. who had debauched Marie de Clèves, the first wife of the same Prince de Condé.

P. 108: May very well refer to Henri de Lorraine, Duc de Guise, assassinated at Blois.

P. 108: Most probably refers to Marguerite de Valois, the king of Navarre, the Duc d'Anjou and the St. Bartholomew.

P. 105: Louis de Béranger du Guasi, one of Henri III.'s favorites, assassinated in 1575 by M. de Viteaux. His epitaph is in the *Mémorial français* 22565, f° 901° (Bibliothèque Nationale). Brantôme, who boasts of being a swordsman, forgets that D'Aubigné was also one.

P. 105: A small town of Brittany (Dep. Ille-et-Vilaine), 14 miles from St. Malo. Has a cathedral of 12th and 18th centuries; the bishopric was suppressed in 1790.

P. 107: To take a journey to Saint-Mathurin was a proverbial expression which meant that a person was mad. Henri Estienne says that this is a purely imaginary saint; be that as it may, he was credited with curing madmen, and the satirical songs of the time are full of allusions to that healing power. (See *Journal de Henri III*, 1720 edition, t. II., pp. 807 and 808.)

P. 108: Lalanne proves by a passage from Spartianus that this anecdote is apocryphal, or that at least Brantôme has embellished it for his own needs. (*Dames*, tom. IX., p. 116.)

P. 108: Hadrian (P. Aelius Hadrianus), 14th in the series of Roman Emperors, A. D. 117-138, succeeded his guardian and kinsman Trajan. His wife, Sabina, here mentioned, was a grand-daughter of Trajan's sister Marciana.

P. 109: Marcus Aurelius Antoninus ("The Philosopher") succeeded Antonius Pius as Emperor in A. D. 168. Died 180. His wife Faustina (as profligate a woman as Messalina herself) was daughter of Pius. Author of the famous *Meditations*. His son Commodus, who succeeded him as Emperor, was a complete contrast in character to his father, being vicious, weak, cruel and dissolute.

P. 109: Another embellished passage. Faustine had died before

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Antoninus Commodus was emperor. Moreover, she was only washed (*sablevare*, says the text) with the blood of the gladiator. (J. Capitolin, *Marc-Antoine le Philosophe*, Chap. xix.)

P. 113: A discreet and veiled allusion to the amours of Marguerite de Valois and of the Duchess de Nevers with La Môle and Coconas. Implicated in the affair of Field Marshals de Cosé and de Montmorency, La Môle, a Provençal nobleman, and Coconas, a Piedmontese, were beheaded on the square of Grève towards the end of April, 1574, and not killed in battle as Brantôme tries to insinuate. The two princesses, mad with despair, transported the bodies in their carriages to the place of burial, at Montmartre, and kept the heads, which they had had embalmed. (*Mémoires de Nevers*, I., p. 75, and *Le Divorce satirique*.)

P. 114: It is Philippe Strozzi, Field Marshal of France, who was born at Venice. Made lieutenant of the naval army in 1579 in order to further the pretensions of Antonio of Portugal, he was defeated, July 28, 1583, and put to death in cold blood by Santa Cruz, his rival. (*Vie et mort . . . de Philippe Strozzi*. Paris, Guill. Lenoir, 1606.)

P. 119: Thomas de Foix, lord of L'Escu or Lescun, was the brother of Mme. de Chateaubriant, mistress of François Ier. He was captured at Pavia and carried, mortally wounded, to the home of the lady of whom Brantôme speaks. It was he who, by the surrender of Cremona in 1522, caused France to lose Italy. (Guicciardini, t. III, p. 473, Fribourg edition, 1775.)

P. 120: Paolo Jovio, *Dialogo delle imprese militari ed amorose*, 1559, p. 13.

P. 120: Blaise de Montluc, author of the *Commentaires*, a diabolical Gascon, made Field Marshal of France in 1574. The siege of La Rochelle, which is here mentioned, took place in 1573. For details on this personage, see the De Ruble edition of the *Commentaires*, 1854-74, 5 vols.

P. 120: Paulus Jovius (Paolo Giovio), Historian, was a native of Como; born 1483, died 1552.

P. 122: In his *Contre-Repentis* (fol. 444, A. of his *Works*, 1576). Joachim du Bellay, the poet, was born about 1524 at Lire in Anjou, of a noble and distinguished family of that Province. After an

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unfortunate youth, his talents ensured him a welcome at the Court of François I. and his sister Marguerite de Valois, where he spent some years. Died young, after a life of ill health, in 1560.

P. 122: Francis Rabelais was born about 1488 at Chinon in Touraine, where his father was an apothecary. After a stormy youth and some years spent as a Monk in more than one Monastery of more than one Order, and later wandering the country as a vagabond secular priest, he was admitted Doctor in the Faculty of Medicine at Montpellier. Countless stories of his pranks and adventures are told, many no doubt mythical. He visited Rome as well as most parts of France in the course of his life. He died Curé of Meudon, about 1558.

P. 123: Chastity-belts of this sort were already in use at Venice at the time.

P. 123: There is in the Hennin collection of prints at the Bibliothèque Nationale (t. III., f° 64) a satirical print representing what Brantôme relates here. A lady returns to her husband the key; but behind the bed, the lover, hidden by a duenna, receives from the latter a key similar to the husband's. This instrument of jealousy was the *cingulum pudicitie* of the Romans, the "Florentine lock" of the sixteenth century. Henri Aldegraver also engraved on the sheath of a dagger a lady who is adorned with a lock of this kind. (Bartsch, *Peinture-Graveur*, VIII., p. 487.) These refinements in jealousy as well as the refinements in debauchery (of which Brantôme will speak later) were of Italian origin. (See on this subject *La Description de l'Isle des Hermaphrodites*, Cologne, 1724, p. 48.)

P. 124: Lampride, *Alexandre Sévère*, Chap. XXII.

P. 125: Nicolas d'Estouteville, lord of Villeconnin, and not Villecouvin, nobleman of the Chambre, died in Constantinople in February, 1567. He had gone to Turkey to forget a disappointment in love or in politics. Here is his epitaph:

Le preux Villeconin en la fleur de ses ans, Hélas! a delaisé nos esbatz si plaisans, Laisant au temple saint de la digne Memoire Son labeur, son renom, son honneur et sa gloire.	8
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P. 127: Dr. Subtil, surname of J. Scott or Duns.

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P. 128: Saint Sophronie.

P. 128: See De Thou liv. XLIX. There were, at the court of France, other women who had escaped from Cyprus and who scarcely resembled this heroine. *Témoin de la Dayelle*, of whom Brantôme speaks in the *Dames illustres*, in the chapter on the Medicis. (*Journal de Henri III.*, 1720 edition, t. II., p. 142.)

P. 132: Guillot le Songeur is, according to Lalanne, Don Gallan el Cuidador of the *Amadis de Gauls*.

P. 132: "Guillot le Songeur," a name applied to any Pensive man,—from the knight Julian le Pensif, one of the characters of the *Amadis of Gaul*.

P. 136: Danae, daughter of Acrisius, King of Argos, who confined her in brazen tower, where Jupiter obtained access in the form of a golden shower.

P. 137: An allusion to Duke Henri de Guise. His wife Catherine de Clèves had, in addition to her "bed lovers," many other intrigues. (See the *Confession de Sancy*, Chap. VIII., notes.)

P. 138: Trajan (M. Ulpus Trajanus), Emperor A. D. 98-117. His wife Plotina, here mentioned, was a woman of extraordinary merits and virtues, according to the statements of all writers, with one exception, who speak of her. She persuaded her husband to adopt Hadrian who became his successor; but Dion Cassius is the only author who says a word as to her intercourse with the latter having been of a criminal character, and such a thing is utterly opposed to all we know of her character.

P. 141: This refers very likely to Brantôme's voyage to Scotland. He had accompanied Queen Mary Stuart in August, 1561, at the time of her departure from France. Riccio, who was the favorite of "low rank," had arrived one year later; but Brantôme, who is relating something which happened a long time before, is not precise: he is unquestionably responding to a request of Queen Catherine.

P. 144: In this passage, where Brantôme cleverly avows his wiles as a courtier, he refers to the Queen of Spain, Elizabeth, the wife of Philip II. The sister of the princess was Marguerite, Queen of Navarre. The two young infantas, whose portraits are examined

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in detail, were: the first, Isabella Claire Eugenie (later married to Albert of Austria), who became a nun towards the end of her life; the other, Catherine, married Charles Emmanuel de Savoye in 1585. It is difficult to-day to see the resemblance of the two princesses to their father, in spite of the great number of portraits of all these personages; in fact, we can say that they were scarcely more beautiful than their mother. (Cf. the beautiful portrait in crayon of Queen Elisabeth at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Estampes Na 21, f° 69.)

P. 144: The two Joyeuses: M. du Bouchage, and a gay companion.

P. 145: Marguerite de Lorraine, married to Anne (Duke) de Joyeuse, the favorite of Henri III. The sister-in-law of whom Brantôme speaks could be neither Mme. du Bouchage nor Mme. de Mercœur, who were spared by the cruelest pamphleteers; he undoubtedly refers to Henriette, Duchess de Montpensier.

P. 146: François de Vendôme, vidam of Chartres? (See *Fanestis*, 1729 edition, p. 845.)

P. 148: Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, canto V., stanza 57:

Io non credo, signor, che ti sia nova  
La legge nostra . . .

P. 149: How can Brantôme, who had friends in the Huguenot camp, deliberately relate such absurd tales?

P. 150: There is a close likeness between this woman and the Godard de Blois, a Huguenot, who was hanged for adultery in the year 1568.

P. 152: At that period several persons bore the name of Beaulieu. Brantôme may have in mind Captain Beaulieu, who held Vincennes for the Ligue in 1594. (Chron. Novenn. III., liv. VII.) The chief prior was Charles de Lorraine, son of the Duke de Guise.

P. 154: The Comtesse de Senison was accused of having contrived his escape, and brought to book for it.

P. 155: According to his habit, Brantôme disfigures what he quotes. Vesta Oppia alone has the right to the name of "good

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woman"; Cluvia was a profession-courtesan. (Cf. *Livy*, XXVI, Chap. xxxiii.)

P. 156: This more human reason is probably truer than the one generally given of Jean's chivalrous conduct regarding his pledge.

P. 156: Jean (surnamed le Bon), King of France, 1350-1364. Taken prisoner by Edward the Black Prince at the battle of Poitiers.

P. 159: Proverb marking the small connection that often exists between gifts of body and good qualities of mind and character.

P. 164: The quotation as given in the text is mutilated and the words transposed. It should read:

"Si tibi simplicitas uxoriam, deditus uni  
Est animus:.....  
.....  
Nil unquam invita donabis conjugem: vendas  
Hac obstante nihil; nihil, haec si nolit, emetur."

JUVENAL, Sat. VI, 205 sqq.

that is to say, "If you are attached solely and entirely to your wife, . . . you will not be able to give a thing away, or sell or buy a thing, without her consent."

P. 164: They used to say of those Italian infamies: "*In Spagna, gli preti; in Francia, i grandi; in Italia, tutti quanti.*"

P. 164: Why not let Boccaccio have the responsibility of this baseness? (*Decameron*, Vth day, Xth story.)

P. 168: Christine de Lorraine, daughter of Duke Charles, married to Ferdinand I. de Medici. This young princess had arrived in Italy adorned in her rich French gowns, which she soon cast off in favor of Italian fashions. This concession quickly made her a favorite. It was at the wedding of Christine that the first Italian operas were performed. (*Litta, Medici di Firenze*, IV., tav. xv.)

P. 171: Brantôme is very likely thinking of Princess de Condé, whom Pisani brought before the Parliament, which acquitted her.

P. 174-175: Probably an allusion to Mme. de Simiers and not to Marguerite de Valois, as Lalanne thinks. More tenacious if not more



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constant than the princess, Louise de Vitry, Lady de Simiers, lost successively Charles d'Humières at Ham, Admiral de Villars at Dourlens, and the Duke de Guise, whom she deeply loved and who gave her so little in return; this does not include Count de Radan, who died at Issoire, and others of less importance. When she reached old age, old Desportes alone remained for her. He had been her first lover, a poet, whom she had forgotten among her warriors; but it was much too late for both of them.

P. 175: Brantôme is mistaken; it is Selus and not Séjanus.

P. 177: Théodore de Bèze, the Reformer; born at Véselais, in the Nivernais, 1519. Author, scholar, jurist and theologian. Died 1566.

P. 178: All the satirical authors agree in charging Catherine de'Medici with this radical change of the old French manners. It would be juster to think also of the civil wars in Italy, which were not without influence upon the looseness of the armies, and, therefore, upon the whole of France.

P. 179: It is the 91st epigram of Bk. I.

P. 180: Isabella de Luna, a famous courtesan mentioned by Baudello.

P. 180: Cardinal d'Armagnac was Georges, born in 1502, who was successively ambassador in Italy and archbishop of Toulouse, and finally archbishop of Evignon.

P. 181: Quotation badly understood. *Crissantis*, in the Latin verse, is a participle and not a proper noun. (Cf. Juvenal, sat. iv.)

P. 181: *Filènes*, from *Philonus*, a courtesan in Lucian.

P. 181: The line should read,

*Ipsa Medullinæ frictum crissantis adorat.*

P. 184: Brantôme seems to speak of himself; yet he might merely have played the side rôle of confidant in the comedy.

P. 187: Brantôme refers to the *Dialogues de la beauté des dames*. Marguerite d'Autriche is not (as he says) the Duchess de Savoie,

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who died in 1530, but the natural daughter of the Emperor; she married Alessandro de'Medici, and later Ottavio Farnese.

P. 189: The famous Church of Brou, at Bourg, was built in 1511-36 by the beautiful Marguerite of Austria, wife of Philibert II, le Beau, Duke of Savoy, in fulfilment of a vow made by Marguerite of Bourbon, her mother-in-law. It contains the magnificent tombs of Marguerite herself, her husband and mother-in-law. Celebrated in a well-known poem, "The Church of Brou," of Matthew Arnold.

P. 190: Jean de Meung, the poet (nicknamed Clopinel on account of his lameness), was born at the small town of Meung-sur-Loire in the middle of the XIIIth Century. Died at Paris somewhere about 1320. His famous *Roman de la Rose* was a continuation of an earlier work of the same name by Guillaume de Lorris, completed and published in its final form by Jean de Meung.

P. 192: Twenty-sixth Tale. It is Lord d'Avesnes, Gabriel d'Albret.

P. 194: Claudia Quinta (Liv. XXIX, 14).

P. 196: Plutarch, *Œuvres mêlées*, LXXVII, t. II., p. 167, in the 1808 edition.

P. 200: The vogue of drawers dated from about 1577; three years later the hoop was in great favor and served to do away with the petticoat. Brantôme probably means that the lady discards the petticoat and wears the hoop over the drawers.

P. 212: The pun on *raynette* and *rays netts* cannot be reproduced in English.

P. 213: Etienne Pasquier, the great lawyer and opponent of the Jesuits, was born at Paris, 1529; died 1615.

P. 213: Thibaut, sixth of the name, Comte de Champagne et Brie, subsequently King of Navarre, was born 1201. Surnamed *Faiscur de Chansons* from his poetic achievements. Brought up at the Court of Philippe-Auguste. The whole romance of his love for Queen Blanche of Castille is apparently apocryphal; it rests almost entirely on statements of one (English) historian, Matthew Paris. She was 16 years older than he, and is never once mentioned in his poems.

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P. 218: E. Pasquier, *Œuvres*, 1728, t. II, p. 88. "Which of the two," says Pasquier, "brings more satisfaction to a lover—to feel and touch his love without speaking to her, or to see and speak to her without touching her?" In the dialogue between Thibaut de Champagne and Count de Soissons, Thibaut preferred to speak.

P. 215: Brantôme aims here at Queen Catherine de'Medici and her favorites.

P. 215: *Cf.* Plutarch, *De Stoicorum repugnantis*, c. xxi.

P. 216: *Id.*, Demetrius, cap. xxvii. Brantôme is mistaken; the woman in question was Thônls.

P. 216: Eighteenth Tale.

P. 216: The "wheel of the nose" was a sort of "mask beard" that women wore in cold weather; it was attached to the hood below the eyes.

P. 220: It was François de Compeys, lord of Gruffy, who sold his estate in 1518 in order to expatriate himself.

P. 221: It is not three but four S's that the perfect lover must carry with him, according to Luis Barabona (*Lagrimas de Angelica*, canto IV.), and these four S's mean:

SABIO, SOLO, SOLICITO ET SEGRETO.

These initial letters were much in vogue in Spain during the sixteenth century.

P. 224: This story was popular in Paris; it was amplified and embellished into a drama and ascribed to Marguerite de Bourgogne. Was it not Isabeau de Bavière?

P. 224: Isabeau, or Isabelle, de Bavière, wife of the half imbecile Charles VI. of France, and daughter of Stephen II., Duke of Bavaria, was born 1371; died 1422. Among countless other intrigues was one with the Duc d'Orléans, her husband's brother. One of her lovers, Louis de Boisbourdon, was thrown into the Seine in a leather sack inscribed *Laissez passer la justice du roi*. The famous story of the Tour de Nesles seems mythical.

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P. 225: See under *Buridan*, in Bayle's *Diet. Critique*. Compare also Villon, in his Ballade of the *Dames des Temps Jadis* (Fair Dames of Yore):

Semblablement où est la reine,  
Qui commanda que Buridan  
Fust jeté en un sac en Seine?

(Likewise where is the Queen, who commanded Buridan to be cast in a sack into the Seine?)

P. 227: Plutarch, Anthony, Chap. xxxii.

P. 229: Livy, lib. XXX., cap. xv. Appien, *De Rebus puniciis*, XXVII.

P. 229: Joachim du Bellay, *Œuvres poétiques*, 1597.

P. 229: *La Vieille Courtisane* ("The Old Courtesan"), fol. 448. B. of the *Œuvres poët.* of Joachim du Bellay, edition of 1597.

P. 230: This pun is difficult to explain.

P. 231: Lucian, *Amours*, XV.

P. 235: Marguerite, wife of Henri IV., whose elegance drew from the old Queen Catherine this remark: "No matter where you may go, the court will take the fashion from you, and not you from the court."

(Brantôme, *Elogé de la reine Marguerite*.)

P. 235: Brantôme alludes to the Duke d'Anjou.

P. 235: Jeanne de Navarre, wife of Philippe le Bel, King of France, daughter and sole heiress of Henri I. of Navarre, was born 1272, died 1305 at the early age of 33. She was a beautiful and accomplished Princess, and the tales told by some historians reflecting on her character are apparently quite without foundation.

P. 235: The *Divorce satyrique* attributes this contrivance to Queen Marguerite, who adopted it to make her husband, the King of Navarre, more deeply enamoured and more naughty.

P. 236: These are taken from an old French book entitled: *De la*

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*louange et beauté des Dames* ("Of the Praise and Beauty of Ladies"). François Corniger has put the same into 18 Latin lines. Vencenio Calmeta has rendered them also into Italian verse, commencing with the words: *Dolos Flaminia*.

P. 236: Pliny speaks of this Helen of Zeuxis.

P. 237: Ronsard, *Œuvres*, 1584 edition, p. 112. It is a poem addressed to the famous painter Clouet, according to Janet, in which the poet sings the praises of his fair lady. This poem has more than one point in common with the present chapter of the *Dames*.

P. 238: Marot had arranged this Spanish proverb into a quatrain, and at the time of the Ligue it was applied to the Infanta of Spain:

Pourtant, si je suis brunette,  
Amy, n'en prenes esmoy,  
Car autant aymer souhaite  
Qu'une plus blanche que moy.

P. 239: Raymond Lulle was a native of Majorca, and lived towards the end of the thirteenth century: he was reputed to be a magician. The story that Brantôme tells was taken from the *Opuscula* by Charles Bovelles, fol. XXXIV. of the in-4° edition of 1521. The famous Raimond Lulle (generally known in England as Raimond Lully), philosopher and schoolman, was celebrated throughout the Middle Ages for his logic and his commentary on Aristotle, and above all for his art of Memory, or *Ars Lulliana*. He was born at Palma, the capital of Majorca, in 1235. He travelled in various countries, and died (1315) in Africa after suffering great hardships, having gone there as a missionary.

P. 240: Or Charles de Bouvelles. His life of Raymond Lulle is a quarto, printed at Paris, and published by Ascencius. It is dated 3rd of the Nones of December, 1511. Several other works by the same author are extant.

P. 240: Arnould de Villeneuve, a famous alchemist of the end of the thirteenth century; he died in a shipwreck, in 1318.

P. 240: Oldrade, a jurist, was born at Lodi in the thirteenth century. His *Codex de falsa moneta* is not known.

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P. 242: Sisteron, in the Department of the Basses-Alpes, on the Durance. Seat of a Bishopric from the 4th Century down to 1770.

P. 242: Aimeric de Rochechouart (1545-1582) was the bishop of Sisteron; he succeeded his uncle Albin de Rochechouart. As to the "very great lady," that applies to one of a dozen princesses.

P. 244: Pliny, XXXIII., cap. iv. Brantôme is mistaken about the temple.

P. 246: Claude Blosset, lady of Torcy, the daughter of Jean Blosset and of Anne de Cugnac. She married Louis de Montberon (in 1558), Baron de Fontaines and Chalandray, first gentleman of the king's bed-chamber. The beautiful Torcy, as she was called, had been presented to Queen Eleonor by Mme. de Canaples, the enemy of Mme. d'Etampes.

P. 246: Hubert Thomas, *Annales de vita Fridorici II. Palatini* (Francfort, 1624), gives no idea of this exaggeration of Queen Eleonor's bust, who was promised to Frederick Palatine.

P. 248: Suetonius, *Octavius Augustus*, cap. lxi.

P. 249: Henri de Lorraine, Duc de Guise, nicknamed *le Balafre*, born 1550. Murdered by the King's (Henri III.) orders at Blois in 1588.

P. 249: Duc d'Anjou, afterwards Henri III.

P. 250: The personages in question are probably Bussy d'Amboise and Marguerite de Valois.

P. 252: The king was Henri II., and the grand widow lady the Duchess de Valentinois. They thought it was due to a charm.

P. 254: Pico della Mirandola, *Opera omnia*, t. II., liv. III., chap. xxii., in the 1517 edition.

P. 254: Pico della Mirandola, one of the greatest of all the brilliant scholars of the Renaissance, and so famous for the precocity and versatility of his talents, was born 1463. After completing his studies at Bologna and elsewhere, he visited Rome, where he publicly exhibited a hundred propositions *De omni re scribibi*, which

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he undertook to defend against all comers. The maturity of his powers he devoted to the study of religion and the Platonic philosophy. He died 1494, on the day of Charles VIII.'s entry into Florence.

P. 255: Ferdinando Francesco Avalos, Marquis de Pescaire, of a well-known Neapolitan family, began his career as a soldier in 1512 at the battle of Ravenna. Distinguished himself by the capture of Milan (1521) and numerous other brilliant feats of arms. Took an important part in the battle of Pavia, where François I. of France was taken prisoner. Wounded in that battle, and died in the same year, 1525. His wife was the celebrated Vittoria Colonna.

P. 257: Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk. XV., Chap. vii. Herod the Great; died B. C. 4. He put to death his wife Mariamn , as well as her grandfather and his own sons by her.

P. 258: Shiraz, a town of Persia, capital of the Province of Fars, famous for its roses, wine and nightingales, sung by the Persian poets Hafiz and Saadi.

P. 258: Plutarch, *Alexander*, Chap. XXXIX.

P. 258: It is in his *Observations de plusieurs singularit s* (Paris, 1554) that Belon reports this fact. (Liv. III., chap. x., p. 179.)

P. 261: The usual form is Ortiagon. The woman is the beautiful Queen Chiomara. (Cf. Livy, XXXVIII., cap. xxiv., and Boccaccio, *De claris mulieribus*, LXXIV.) Chiomara, wife of Ortiagon, King of Galatia, was taken prisoner by the Romans when Cn. Manlius Vulso invaded Galatia, B. C. 189. The story is told by Polybius (XXII., 21).

P. 262: Suetonius, *C sar*, LII.

P. 263: Livy, XXX., cap. xv.

P. 263: Plutarch, *Cato the Elder*. Brant me attributes the anecdote to Scipion.

P. 265: Charles de Lorraine, Cardinal de Guise, known as Cardinal de Lorraine, died in 1574. He played an important r le at the Council of Trent. Brant me refers to the truce of Vaucelles between Henri II. and the Emperor, which Cardinal Caraffa had suc-

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ceeded in breaking in 1556. This passage had evidently been written before 1588, the year of the death of another Cardinal de Guise, the brother of Balafre.

P. 265: The beautiful Venitians are described by Vecellio as wearing exquisite gowns on holidays. (See Vecellio, *Habiti antichi*, Venice, 1590.)

P. 266: This passage is not in the *Dies gentiles* by Alessandro, but in Herodotus, II., chap. ix.

P. 267: What Brantôme says of Flora is not true. The woman in question was not called Flora, but Acca Taruntia.

P. 269: Pausanius, Suetonius, and Manilius have not written special works on women. Brantôme is no doubt referring to the anecdotes that are found in their works.

P. 273: This princess was Catherine de'Medici.

P. 275: The same story has been told of Mademoiselle, cousin german of Louis XIV., with this addition that she was in the habit of giving any of her pages who were tempted by her charms a few louis to enable them to satisfy their passion elsewhere.

P. 276: Suetonius, *Vitellius*, cap. ii.: "Messalina petit ut sibi pedes præberet excalceandos." Brantôme prefers to quote in his own manner.

P. 276: LVIIth Tale.

P. 276: Undoubtedly the grand prior François de Lorraine, who accompanied Mary Stuart to Scotland; however, D'Aumale and René d'Elbeuf also accompanied her.

P. 281: Philip II., of Spain, son of Charles the Fifth, born 1537; died 1588. The husband of Queen Mary of England.

P. 282: Béatrix Pacheco was lady of honor to Eleonor d'Autriche prior to 1544 with several other Spanish ladies; she became Countess d'Entremont through her marriage with Sébastien d'Entremont. Her daughter, the woman in question here, was Jacqueline, the second wife



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of Admiral de Coligny, against whom the enemies of her husband turned; she was not, however, beyond reproach.

P. 284: The description which follows was textually taken by Brantôme from account printed at Lyons, in 1549, entitled: "La magnificence de la superbe et triomphante entrée de la noble et antique cité de Lyon faicte au très-chrestien Roy de France Henry deuxiesme."

P. 286: Brazilian wood, known before the discovery of America. *Brésil* is a common noun here.

P. 287: The king's visit to Lyons took place September 18, 1548.

P. 288: *La volte* was a dance that had come from Italy in which the gentleman, after having made his partner turn two or three times, raised her from the floor in order to make her cut a caper in the air. This is the caper of which Brantôme is speaking.

P. 288: Paul de Labarthe, lord of Thermes, Field Marshal of France, died in 1562. (Montluc, Ruble edition, t. II., p. 55.)

P. 289: Scio (Chios) was the only island in the Orient where the women wore short dresses.

P. 298: Suetonius, *Caligula*, XXV. "Cæsonia was first the mistress and afterwards the wife of the Emperor Caligula. She was neither handsome nor young when Caligula fell in love with her; but she was a woman of the greatest licentiousness . . . At the time he was married to Lollia Paulina, whom, however, he divorced in order to marry Cæsonia, who was with child by him, A. D. 38. . . . Cæsonia contrived to preserve the attachment of her imperial husband down to the end of his life; but she is said to have effected this by love-potions, which she gave him to drink, and to which some persons attributed the unsettled state of Caligula's mental powers during the latter years of his life. Cæsonia and her daughter (Julia Drusilla) were put to death on the same day that Caligula was murdered, A. D. 41."

P. 299: The Emperor Caracalla (M. Aurelius Antoninus) was the son of the Emperor Septimius Severus and was born at Lyons, at the

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time his father was Governor of Gallia Lugdunensis. *Caracalla* (like *Caligula*) is really only a nickname, derived from the long Gaulish cloak which he adopted and made fashionable. Reigned from Severus' death at York in 211 to his own assassination in 217. His brother Geta was at first associated with him in the Empire. Him he murdered, and is said to have suffered remorse for the act to the end of his life,—remorse from which he sought distraction in every kind of extravagant folly and reckless cruelty.

P. 299: Spartianus, *Caracalla*, Chap. x.

P. 800: This son was Geta.

P. 801: Béatrix was the daughter of Count Guillaume de Tenda; to her second husband, Phillipe Marie Visconti, she brought all the wealth of her first husband, Facino Cane. In spite of her ripe years, Béatrix was suspected of adultery with Michel Orombelli, and Phillipe Marie had them both killed. As a matter of fact this was a convenient way of appropriating Facino Cane's wealth.

P. 801: Collenuccio, liv. IV., anno 1194.

P. 801: Filippo Maria Visconti; born 1391, died 1447. Last Duke of Milan of the house of Visconti, the sovereignty passing at his death to the Sforzas.

P. 801: Facino (Bonifacio) Cane, the famous *condottiere* and despot of Alessandria, was born of a noble family about 1360. The principality he eventually acquired in N. Italy embraced, besides Alessandria, Pavia, Vercelli, Tortona, Varese, and all the shores of the Lago Maggiore. Died 1412.

P. 801: Mother of Frederick II.

P. 801: Pandolfo Collenuccio, famous as author, historian and juris-consult towards the end of the XIVth century. Born at Pesaro, where he spent most of his life, and where he was executed (1500) by order of Giovanni Sforza, in consequence of his intrigues with Cæsar Borgia, who was anxious to acquire the sovereignty of that city.

P. 802: Daughter of Bernardin de Clermont, Vicomte de Tallard.

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## NOTES AND APPENDICES

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P. 802: Brantôme undoubtedly aims here at Marguerite de Clermont.

P. 808: Jean de Bourdeille.

P. 808: Renée, daughter of Louis XII., married to the Duke of Ferraro. She was ungainly but very learned.

P. 804: Marguerite d'Angoulême.

P. 812: Meung-sur-Loire, dep. Loiret, on right bank of the Loire, eleven miles below Orléans.

P. 812: Eclaron, dép. Haute-Marne.

P. 812: Leonor, Duke de Longueville.

P. 812: François de Lorraine, Duke de Guise.

P. 818: Louis I., Prince de Condé.

P. 818: Captain Averet, died at Orléans in 1562.

P. 818: *Compère* was the name King Henri II. gave the Constable de Montmorency.

P. 816: *Octavius* is translated *Octavio* by Brantôme. Cf. Suetonius, *Caligula*, XXXVI., and *Octavius Augustus*, LXIX.

P. 816: Suetonius, *Nero*, XXXIV.

P. 818: Brantôme undoubtedly refers to Henri III. and to the Duke d'Alençon, his brother.

P. 819: Plutarch names this woman *Aepasia* and makes her a priestess of Diana. Cf. *Artaxerxes-Maemon*, Chap. XXVI.

P. 819: Collenuccio, liv. V., p. 208.

P. 819: Artaxerxes I. (Longimanus), King of Persia for forty years, B. C. 465 to 425; he succeeded his father Xerxes, having put to death his brother Darius.

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## NOTES AND APPENDICES

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P. 320: Wife of François d'Orléans.

P. 320: Diane died at the age of 66, April 22, 1566; she was born in 1499.

P. 320: Jacqueline de Rohan-Gié, married to François d'Orléans, Marquis de Rothelin.

P. 321: François Robertet, widow of Jean Babou, whose second husband was Field Marshal d'Aumont.

P. 321: Catherine de Clermont, wife of Guy de Mareuil, grandmother of the Duke du Montpensier, François, surnamed the *Prince-Dauphin*.

P. 321: Gabrielle de Mareuil, married to Nicolas d'Anjou, Marquis de Mézières.

P. 321: Jacqueline or Jacquette de Montberon.

P. 321: Françoise Robertet, widow of Jean Babon de la Bourdaisière.

P. 322: Paule Viguler, baronne de Fontenille.

P. 322: Françoise de Longwi.

P. 322: The praise of this Toulousean beauty is to be found in the very rare opusculé by G. Minot, *De la beauté*, 1587.

P. 323: Anne d'Este. She was not exempt from the faults of a corrupt court.

P. 323: This journey occurred in 1574.

P. 323: Louis XII.

P. 324: Jean d'O, seigneur de Maillebois.

P. 324: It is not François Gonsagne, but Guillaume Gonsagne, his brother and successor to the duchy of Mantoue, born in 1588, died in 1587.

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## NOTES AND APPENDICES

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P. 825: He returns here to the Duchess de Guise.

P. 826: At the wedding of Charles Emmanuel, married to Catherine, daughter of Philip II. of Spain.

P. 827: Marie d'Aragon, wedded to Alphonse d'Avalos, Marquis del Guasto or Vasto.

P. 827: Henri II., son of Francis I., and husband of Catherine de Medici. Born 1518. Came to throne in 1547; accidentally killed in a tourney by Montgomeri 1559.

P. 827: Paul IV. (of the illustrious Neapolitan family of Caraffa) was raised to the chair of St. Peter in 1558; died 1559.

P. 827: This viceroy was Don Peralan, Duke d'Alcala, who entered Naples June 12, 1559.

P. 828: Claude de Lestrangle?

P. 831: Brantôme's memory fails him. Of the two daughters of the Marquess, Béatrix, the first married Count de Potenza; the other, Prince de Sulmone.

P. 836: His son was François Ferdinand, Viceroy of Sicily, died in 1571.

P. 837: Soliman II.

END OF VOLUME ONE.



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